



龍王と
落ちきた
滅びゆく
魔女の
国

II

舞阪洗
よう太
illustration
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「いーですか、大ーがさん」
「あ、ああ？」

「あなたは
すけべえが過ぎます。」

百歩譲って人の男子は
そういうものだとしても、
露骨なすけべえはいけません。
見るにしても触るにしても、
なんといいますが、
もう少し上品にしないと
駄目ですよ？」



「どうして魔女の中に男がいる?」
「貴様、何者だ?」
口々に叫ぶ敵兵にかまわず
ナイフは別の「頭の馬に自分の乗った馬を寄せる。」

「貴様を屠る男の名を
地獄まで持つていくがいい!
俺の名は——」

Prologue 1

Naga and Harrigan were facing each other in the residence building of the fort.

Harrigan, as always, wore her thinly-made clothing, which exposed many parts of her body, and sat on a folding stool.

Naga was at first surprised by the witches' clothing, but had recently gotten used to it.

Thanks to that, the number of times he became captivated by the witches' scant dress was reduced compared to when he had first arrived.... However, he couldn't stop thinking perverted thoughts once in awhile; he was a man after all.

Today as well, Naga sat at the table while wearing his hakama with flashy hues, the same one he wore when he fell into this world for the first time.

Rather, since those were the only clothes he owned, that was the only thing he wore.

Right now, both of them were about to analyze the extent of the Cassandra Kingdom's military power and their disposition.

Otherwise, they won't be able to determine the details of their strategy.

Yuuki, who conducted the reconnaissance of Fort Ein, said: "Judging from the time I saw them, I think there are around one thousand of them, and it will probably keep increasing."

Saying that, the remaining issue, in the end, will be the assessment of the total enemy forces.

"What do you think Harrigan?"

Naga was looking for confirmation, and Harrigan responded.

“Cassandra Kingdom’s biggest mobilization of power will probably be more than 2000. If we consider the conscription of new soldiers from the populace, there’s a chance it would range from 2500 to 3000 I think, but perhaps they won’t do so.”

“Why do you think so?”

“It seems that, a while ago, a battle between human armies concluded. Therefore, it could be said to be one of the reasons why it would be unreasonable to forcefully conscript their own citizens. What’s more, they have to pay attention to other countries’ mobilization.”

“Hm?” – Naga frowned and creased his eyebrows.

“Other countries? What do you mean?”

“Despite the fighting between each country calming down, as well as the support and backup coming from the Church, if you show any weakness, you’ll be taken advantage of. Such is the way of this world.”

“I see. If you show a moment of weakness, you’ll be taken advantage of... is that so? I have the feeling it’s a story I’ve heard and seen before.”

For a while, a gruesome smile appeared on his face, but it disappeared right away.

“In other words, we can’t take the protection of our base lightly.”

Seeing that unusual smile which appeared on his face Harrigan felt bothered, however, now wasn’t the time for questioning that.

“That’s right. If they recruit a new army from the public, the fact about the royal capital guards' defense will be disclosed to the surrounding countries. Deploying newly recruited soldiers would mean the same as spreading around the news about the royal capital being vacant. Knowing that there are no guards will result in the nearby countries trying to aim for it, just like an empty nest, which is possible. That’s why, such conduct is out of the question.”

“Speaking of which, was it 2000... you were talking about?”

“I see it that way. At present, it would probably be their limit.”

“When it comes to that, their raid.... that’s right, it will depend on the extent

of the preparations done by the Cassandra kingdom or something like that.”

Naga took the sketched map, drawn by Yuuki, in his hand.

“From Fort Ein to this place, there are neither towns nor settlements. There are also no fortifications that could be used to store an army’s provisions. This means that, in order to support the invading army, they will have to carry the provisions themselves.

Naga muttered while focusing on the map.

“If so, they have to assign 300-400 of their people to their light and heavy troops reducing their actual army to around 1600-1700. Well, I wonder if it also depends on how long they expect the battle to last. Then, were we to consider factors such as their low level of armaments, provisions, and tactics...”

Raising his head, Naga said toward to Harrigan.

“I wonder if it will be about 10 days til the start of the battle.”

Harrigan answered while making a difficult expression.

“About 10 days? Indeed, we nearly have no time left.”

“Kukuku”- Naga chuckled as he nodded.

“Far from nearly, we don’t have any time at all.”

His smile, which seemed to be pleased with the difficult challenge and situation, could be said to express a certain seriousness.

“Still, we have the weapons which their comrades left while fleeing. Good thing they didn’t have arrows and bows with them. What’s more, we got our hands on their horses.”

That’s right, at the moment Naga & Co. drove away Cassandra’s troops, who were occupying the fort, the enemy left spears and bows while fleeing.

Naga and the rest were able to pick up a good amount of the enemy’s weapons without expending much effort.

Nevertheless, the witches didn’t know how to use swords and bows.

With that, picking up the weapons would be useless.

Just what he was aiming for?

“Despite that, to think that the day when I’d ride a horse would come.”

She gave off a sigh.

“But despite saying so, I know it would be different in case of Ais, who runs way faster than a horse, but I think you’re probably different.”

“As expected, when it comes to a running competition, I can’t be compared with Ais.”

“You’re making quite the sad expression there, ain'tcha?”

“To be honest, I don’t feel inclined to ride a horse.”

“Why is that?”

“No, how should I explain it?”

Harrigan eyes wandered around before she shook her head as if giving up and said.

“Isn’t it scary?”

“You? You mean you’re scared of horses?”

“Don’t laugh!”

“No no, it’s not like I’m laughing. Still, to think that there’s something you’d be scared of, that’s quite unexpected.”

“You’re laughing!”

Snap – Harrigan pointed at Naga as her hair writhed and rose into the air. Seeing that, Naga waved his hand hurriedly.

“Wait wait! To be honest, I’m a little bit scared as well.”

“W, what?”

Because Harrigan’s hair fell limp, Naga gave off a sigh of relief and said.

“Somehow, I feel like the horses here give off a different sensation in comparison with the ones I know.”

Making a suspicious face, Harrigan asked.

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t quite get it myself but I wonder whether or not I rode horses a long time ago when I was much smaller. Somehow, the sense of compatibility with my body and the horse size are not agreeing with each other.”

“Is that so? So it has something to do with your lost memories...You still can’t recollect anything?”

Once Harrigan asked with a sad face, Naga answered nonchalantly.

“Should I say as much....? It mostly doesn’t improve, but, I’m fine that way. I’ll remember little by little without rushing.”

It was a manner of speech which made one unable say whether the concerned person had amnesia or not.

“Rather than that, I wonder if we shouldn’t return to the topic of horses.”

“O...Oh?”

“It depends on whether the horse is big or small. If we plan to have a good command of it, the bigger one should be better. It can run long distances, and also has good endurance. You, who are witches, in comparison with humans are indeed faster and have better endurance, but still are inferior to horses. As long as it’s convenient, to obtain the best result, you ought to use everything at your disposal. Isn’t it better to be prepared?”

“That’s.....right.”

“When it’s necessary, I’ll come to help you.”

While saying so and laughing, Harrigan sent him a doubtful glance.

“Even if you say help, how exactly do you plan to do so?”

“True. For example, by picking you up once you fall from a horse?”

“Wouldn’t helping me be something to do before falling?!”

“It’s fine, don’t be angry. Well... in that case, won’t you ride together with me on my horse? By doing so, you won’t have to control the horse, and also there’s no fear that you’ll fall, right?”

“O-Oh, this is what you mean? I see, that doesn’t seem to be half bad.”

“In exchange, in order not to fall, you better cling to me, otherwise it might be troublesome, you see? I need you to clasp your hands around my lower back and put your strength into your arms, so as to press your chest firmly to my back, you see.”

“So this is your aim?!”

Again, Harrigan’s hair became a bundle and rose up with a swoosh.

“Uwah, wait wait, that was a joke! Don’t hit me with your hair just because of a joke!”

Waving energetically with his hands in front of his eyes, Harrigan’s hair, which was raised in a bundle, fell gently. Naga sighed with relief deep within his heart.

(This girl’s hair is hard, it’s no joke. Were I to be hit with all her might, I’d certainly die.) “Let’s get back on topic.”

“I have no objections, but you see...”

“Well, if it’s related to horse riding, you will somehow manage it with a little bit of practice.”

“That’s right. I used to ride a little bit as a little child, so if I practice a bit, I’ll probably grasp that feeling from long ago.”

“Oh, so there was a time you rode horses?”

“I think I should have told you, but in the past, there used to be vagabonds who would control their horses and visit the black forest. That’s why; we would buy and raise horses together with other clans.”

“By other clans, you mean witches?”

“That’s right, I think this also should’ve been mentioned, but there are several clans of witches inside the black forest. Originally, we wouldn’t interact with them that often, even now, we would mingle with them every now and then.”

Hearing Harrigan’s words, Naga showed an expression of thinking about something.

“The other clans... is it unreasonable to request cooperation from them?”

At Naga’s question, Harrigan answered with a gloomy face.

“I’ve already said we don’t interact that much. Furthermore, the clans of witches usually prefer to work within their own group, so they don’t have any regard for other clans. Not to mention, they don’t seem to ask for help unless they themselves are in danger.”

“Is that so? So you’re the same?”

“If it were to be the other clan requesting for our help because they are under attack, we would help. Still, as you can see, we lack manpower, which is not enough to make a difference. We wouldn’t be able to repel even the scouting troops with just 5 or 6 people.”

While folding his hands Naga nodded with a serious face.

“That’s true....”

“The other clans are much the same. They are occupied with protecting their own territory. If we try to rescue other clans only to be annihilated ourselves, wouldn’t it be the same as putting the cart before the horse?”

“If the other clans are annihilated, our position will also be in danger. Look, don’t they say ‘the teeth are exposed to the cold if there are no lips’ ?”

“Do they say so...?”

“No...I think they did say that, but...”

Naga suddenly tilted his head.

“I know what you want to say. Once there are no lips, the next thing that is exposed to the cold are bare teeth, is what you mean. Unfortunately, there’s no person among the witches who would see the future that way. No... there is probably one person that is willing to do so... but let’s leave that for later. Since, for this battle, all the members are already under our leadership, we have to proceed in accordance with the tactics. If we were to add the guys from the other clans right now, it might cause misunderstandings, thus, it may lead to confusion. Wouldn’t that be troublesome?”

“Yes, it’s as you say. If we don’t have all the members operate in union, it will become a bother.”

“What’s more, if we can win this battle, they will probably change that watch-

and-see attitude of theirs and might become interested in listening to us. First, we, the Clan of Harrigan have to win.”

Harrigan declared in a strong voice.

“Well then, we can only do it in accordance with the plan.”

”Umu”

Naga nodded deeply, as he approved of her words.

“Providing that matter is solved for the time being, let’s go back to the main topic. Our strategy is what I explained the other day. Consider that the key to success and failure lies in how many preparations we can make before the enemy attacks.”

“10 days was it? We have to complete the preparations by then.”

“No, it requires time to transport and prepare at the spot. What’s more, there is a possibility that Cassandra's army will advance faster than we expect. For that reason, yes, I’d like to finish the preparations in about 6 days, 7 at the latest.”

Harrigan raised her head as if staring at the room’s ceiling and said.

“Around 6 to 7 days? It seems we won’t have time to sleep or rest.”

“As for that, please give up.”

“I don’t care. If we can protect the fort with that, we will do whatever it takes. Still...”

For the first time, a shade of anxiety was visible on Harrigan’s face.

“Can we truly repel Cassandra’s army with such a plan?”

“I should have probably told you. In battle, it’s about quantity not quality. Even if you’re mighty warriors, you cannot face an enemy of two thousand. Providing the terrain is a little bit complex, I can think of several ways, such as a night attack, or a surprise attack depending on the number of units. Regardless, in this case, these methods seem to be impossible. The only thing remaining would be to oppose the enemy with numbers.”

Saying that strongly, Harrigan made a miserable face.

“Despite saying numbers, you meant them....?”

“Their appearance does not matter. They will do the assigned job without feeling any unfairness or dissatisfaction. Isn't that great?”

Saying so, Naga laughed heartily.

“They are guys with lots of fortitude.”

(Should I say this guy has a couple screws loose...?)

“What? You still have some doubts regarding the tactics?”

“No, it has nothing to do with that.”

(I wonder if he's not a little crazy. Just what kind of person are you, I wonder?) Harrigan uttered those sarcastic words within her heart “Moving on, shouldn't we begin building the actual army soon, as well as its training? We don't have time, so if we don't hurry...”

“That's right, we don't have time. From now on, we will work day and night.”

As Naga and Harrigan stood up from the folding stools they left that plain room with a wooden floor.

What kind of plan will Naga create?

And what did two of them mean by 'building' an army.

What kind of preparations will they arrange within the 10 days before the Cassandra's army attacks?

The battle between 20 against 2000 has been decided. This will mark the beginning of the war between the witches and humanity, as well as Naga's.

Prologue 2

“What’s the situation with Harrigan and the rest, Eliushune?”

The person that was asking was a short witch with an immature build, which had no curves, wearing a headdress with a characteristic pattern that stood out.



She seemed to be a young girl, whose appearance wasn't even that of a 10 year old. Her facial expression was young and cute.

What she wore was a short ancient skirt, which had lots of space exposed. It suited that slender physique that wasn't curvy.

However, on her face, a fearless expression was seen which didn't match that appearance of hers.

The atmosphere that she gave off was filled with confidence which one would think had lots of experience. That disparity could make those who witnessed it anxious.

On the other hand, there was a witch who was probably in her late teens, named Eliushune.

Because she was half kneeling, her height wasn't clear, but, her back was taller than that of her partner, and her outward looks were amazing as well.

Since she was wearing a mantle that wrapped around her body, her body lines weren't obvious. Nevertheless, there was no doubt she looked older than her companion.

However, what Eliushune said next was

“By the way, Mother,”

She said.

Facing the young girl, she called her ‘Mother’.

The young girl as well, had a natural expression despite being called that.

No surprise, as the witch who looked like a young girl named Vita Sol skjær Sraymeyer, was in fact the head of the Sraymeyer Clan which ruled the domain next to the Harrigan Clan's inside the black forest.

“It seems that the talk about the Cassandra Kingdom preparing an onslaught on the black forest using all its forces was true. Right now, two thousand units of their military have gathered at Fort Ein.”

Vita slightly moved her eyebrows.

“Two thousand? Is that true? Speaking of which, what will Harrigan do? Do

they plan to flee?”

“No, about that...”

On the face of the reporting girl named Eliushune a sign of confusion appeared.

“They are preparing for battle.”

“What on earth!”

Vita opened her eyes widely as she bent slightly backward.

The girl composed herself, at the same time looking into Eliushune’s eyes “Do they intend to fight? Or request assistance from us? Or could it be, they plan on an honorable defeat? No no, she’s not such a simpleton. Just what is that woman thinking?”

Vita, who was speaking in a manner unsuitable for her appearance, spoke as if throwing away her words.

“If those guys are driven away, the next one to bear the full brunt of the humans' attack will be us. That’s why I was wondering whether it would be fine to lend them some of our power were we to be requested to assist them.”

“It seems that the Clan of Harrigan intends to throw all their forces into that battle against the Cassandra Kingdom.”

Vita counted inside her head the witches which she knew were from Harrigan’s household.

“Despite saying all their forces, certainly, their number should only be 20. Throwing in all of their forces is only bound to fail.”

“If their base becomes empty, it will be the perfect opportunity for us to take over one or two of their fortifications, right?”

Vita, who looked at Eliushune, narrowed her eyes.

“Are you an idiot, Eliushune?”

“grumbling.....”

Being glared at in a scathing manner by Vita, Eliushune was at a loss for words.

“Talking about attacking Harrigan & Co.’s back and stealing their fortifications, do you think there’s any profit in doing that for us?”

“There’s not...?”

“Doing that will only make them perish faster. Like I said before, if they become destroyed, we will be the next one to bear the brunt of humans’ attack.”

“We need to have them do their best in hindering the human army.”

“Oh, I see.”

(This girl has a high level of magic and combat skills, but she’s basically a simpleton. Can’t she understand how complicated this situation is?) “Fuu” – Vita breathed a small sigh.

(I wish we had some smart witches, like Lela.)

“Mother, is there something wrong?”

“Hm, it’s nothing. Rather than that, don’t take your eyes off of Harrigan & Co, Eliushune. Assuming they are driven away, the human army will probably try to invade the black forest. In the worst case, they will stretch their hands toward our territory. I’ll gather all our members, my children, and make them prepare for war.”

“Understood, Mother.”

“I’ll entrust you with watching them, just don’t commit a blunder, Eliushune, got it?”

“I can’t believe you’re saying such a thing, Mother. Have I, Eliushune, ever committed any blunders before?”

“Huuh?”(voice of great annoyance)

Vita glared at her with wide eyes.

“I don’t like that kind of joke, Eliushune.”

“...”

“If I were to count all the blunders which you’ve made until now it might take all day.”

“.....”

“This time’s reconnaissance is different. Got it?”

“...Of course, Mother.”

Vita, who calmly nodded, told her solemnly.

“If you commit another blunder, I’ll strip you naked and hang you up from a tree.”

Eliushune distorted her face, giving out a small shriek.

“How cruel!”

“If you don’t like it, then do your job properly and report to me without missing any details.”

“G-Got it.”

“Then go.”

“Yes.”

(When mother says so, then there’s nothing but to do it. Were I to fail in my duty, I’ll be stripped naked and hung from a tree... then poked, knocked and toyed with by the other witches.) Cold sweat surfaced on her face as she stood up.

Once she stood up, indeed, she was taller than Vita, with Vita’s head only reaching the upper part of Eliushune’s stomach, below her chest.

Still.

Eliushune’s head began to lower down little by little.

Because her body was hidden under the mantle, it was hard to tell whether or not it was her back shrinking. At least, it looked as if her back was shrinking by looking next to her.

Eliushune’s head instantly matched the height of Vita’s head, who was standing right in front of her eyes.

Despite that, Eliushune’s head didn’t stop descending.

It lowered to the position of Vita’s lower back, and then her lap, finally

ceasing at the moment it was on the level of the wooden floor. It looked as though her head was placed on top of the floor after being beheaded.

Like that, Eliushune opened her mouth.

It was a bizarre scene, which would guarantee those who didn't know what was happening would shake with fear.

"Once something happens, I'll appropriately submit the report."

"I wonder if it won't be too frequent and wordy coming from you, Eliushune. Be it the army of humans or Harrigan, don't be careless."

"Understood."

Suddenly, the remaining portion of her head sunk and disappeared.

What was left, spreading out on the floor, was the lightly brown colored mantle worn by the girl.

Speaking of which, rather than her back shrinking, there is no mistaking it was Eliushune's magic that made her vanish, in other words, it teleported her to another place.

Watching the mantle lying on the floor without its owner, the head of the witches, Vita, muttered.

"Harrigan, just what are you thinking? If you intend to cause me trouble, I'll not forgive you. Providing that you do so, I'll strip you naked and spank that ass of yours a hundred times. Since your ass became quite big, it will be much easier to do so."

After that, the girl looked up, with sharp eyes, at the back side of the roof, where the beams of the wooden building were exposed.

"Despite that, this attitude isn't like Harrigan. Was there some sort of change in her group? Or could it be that the predecessors, who had left the forest, returned?.....No no, that can't be. Even if they were to come back now..... If so....."

Vita, who folded her hands while deeply pondering, shook her head as she unfolded her hands.

“Well, that’s fine. Rather than pondering about what she plans, if the full force of Cassandra’s army comes to take over the forest.... the situation ahead of us will greatly change. No, rather the whole era will be influenced”

“kukuku” – The young girl, Vita, chuckled.

“Assuming that’s true, it will be decided that I will live during a time of great changes. Interesting... isn’t it getting interesting? Hahaha”

Vita sat alone inside the room, her high-pitched laughing voice reverberating.

Chapter 1: The Night before the Battle

Part 1

Naga predicted that the Cassandra Kingdom's army would advance from Fort Ein in around 10 days.

If you were thinking optimistically, the fastest they could depart was 7-8 days, and at the latest they would begin their march in 12-13 days.

Speaking of the time Naga and Harrigan had to prepare for battle, you could honestly say that they had absolutely no time to waste.

In order to carry out Naga's strategy, they needed to gather a large number of items. All the witches began preparations for the battle. They would immerse themselves in their work, even to the extent that they spared no time for dinner. For the sake of preparing for the battle, Harrigan assembled most of the witches she was in charge of. Originally, there was no blood relations among the witches, so it would be much more suitable to call them a clan or clique, rather than a family. Nevertheless, following their customs, they named themselves as family.

These were the witches who were led by Harrigan as head of the family.

Ais Aishuria Haindora

Yuuki Yuumi Haindora

Lela Laylah Haindora

Nonoeru Norris Haindora

Linne Lilika Haindora & Linna Liluka Haindora (twins)

Cu Cunerias Haindora

Kay Canesh Haindora

Selena Serenity Haindora

Eleonortha Elleuch Haindora

Mimone Memoriiru Haindora

Ikushina Ereno Haindora

Jiiniasu Jioretto Haindora

Sahha Zekusesu Haindora

Neneru Memena Haindora

Arurukan Nya Haindora

Narcissus Sussa Haindora

The full force, including Harrigan, was a grand total of 18.

“So it’s 18 against an enemy of 2000. Including me, it would be 19 people. Hahaha, I hate to say it, but this makes me want to laugh.”

Harrigan narrowed her eyes as she watched his self-mocking laughter.

“There are still several witches left in the fortification inside the forest, but there’s no way to leave it completely empty. With that, I think we can count on these numbers being our battle potential.”

Naga suppressed his laughter and nodded as his expression turned serious.

“Well, it can’t be helped, no use wishing for things we don’t have. If we only have this many, you can say the only thing remaining is to do it and to think of a way to win. In any case, I still have to grasp each person’s ability, you see.”

“Got it. I’ll begin explaining my daughters’ magic.”

Once Naga said that, Harrigan began introducing the witches to Naga while explaining the abilities of each of them.

Just to make sure, Lela wrote the contents down in her notebook.

Despite her efforts, Naga, who had a charm attached to his body, couldn’t

read the letters In the end, the role of the charm was to translate the other party's words by repeating them within the person's mind.

Naga was in the midst of desperately trying to learn the writing of this world, however, he couldn't make it in time. Lela put down in her notes the content of Harrigan's explanation for the future.

Once Harrigan's explanation ended, while thinking about the magic and special abilities of each of the witches that he'd just heard, Naga added some amendments to his tactics. However, there was no need for any big changes.

This tactic was created with him already having grasped some of their abilities to a certain degree, like Harrigan, Nonoeru, Ais, and Yuuki, and implemented them as the main aspects of the tactic.

As he confirmed that fact, Naga decided on their jobs, assignments, and arrangements.

Naga addressed the witches lined up before him.

"As you are all aware, there's no time remaining. I'd like to have you increase the speed of your work to the limit. At the same time, I want you to strive to understand your roles."

Naga looked around at the witches and saw Yuuki turn her face away as usual, but this time, it made him wonder whether she was paying attention.

"Hey, Yuuki."

Yuuki, whose body twitched, turned her head with her eyebrows raised.

"Haa? Why are you calling me by name? It feels gross, so won't you please stop?"

(It seems that she was listening to me. If she was shouldn't I give her a little attention?) Thinking so, Naga raised his hand and tried to catch her attention.

"No no, your role is certainly big. If I were to express it in different words, even saying that 'the success and failure of this battle will fall on your shoulders' wouldn't be an exaggeration."

"I...I know of that. Even without you telling me to do my job properly. Don't call me by name. It somehow feels like I'm a kid who doesn't know what they're

doing.”

”Yes, my bad my bad.”

While apologizing pathetically inside his heart, Naga stuck out his tongue.

Harrigan took over Naga’s speech.

”Yuuki too, depending on your work, the future of our household will be at stake. The outcome of this battle will settle the future of the witches. If we win, the future will remain open to us. However, if we lose, there will be no hope. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that this will concern not only our group, but also the future of the other witches who live in the forest. Everyone, work with desperation like you’ve gone mad.”

Hearing Harrigan’s words, the young witches nodded with grave expressions.

Like this, it was decided that both Naga and Harrigan’s family would work vigorously, in order to repel the attack of Cassandra’s army which was about to close in.

The actual job of two of the witches was tree lumbering.

First, they completely lumbered the the area near the fort.

Ais stood in front of the trunk of a big tree, which was a little over half a meter thick, and raised her hands ‘Go’

Gathering at a distance, Naga and the other witches raised their hands to give a signal while watching.

”Haaa!”

With a yell, Ais crouched and delivered a single roundhouse kick. *Hyuun* – The sound pierced through the air and reached Naga’s ears.

Her thin clothes flipped lightly when the back of her leg sank into the tree trunk. At the same time, the sound of crashing echoed.

- Crash* (?)

(Oi oi, will she honestly be alright?)

Even though he knew that her body became very tough thanks to it being

enhanced with magic, it was a view that still made him want to cringe.

Were it a regular person, their leg would probably break in half, instead of the tree trunk. Nevertheless, Ais lowered her leg calmly and regained her balance.

Immediately after that, the big tree which received her kick slowly toppled.
Zuun – The tree fell, making the surrounding earth tremble.

Naga who witnessed the might of Ais' kick muttered without thinking.

“As expected she's a human battering ram, that Ais.”

It was the moment when Naga arrived to watch Ais' work.

Naga was wearing the clothes he arrived in again today.

He was careful not to damage them needlessly, as they could easily get dirty and worn out. Since there were no dry-goods stores here, he could only continue like this for the time being.

(Hm? Dry-goods store...the store...dry-goods...the clothes from the world which I came from...) Pondering about that, he heard Yuuki's voice which distracted his thoughts.

“Yes, step back, step back.”

As Naga raised his head, Yuuki, who was waiting near him, rushed over to the fallen tree while her charming clothes fluttered.

(Harrigan said that my clothes are strange, but If I were to say theirs are many times stranger than mine. No, rather than saying strange, wouldn't it be better to say they have more sexual appeal?) Among the witches, there were many who had their arms, buttocks, and abdomens exposed.

(I already got used to seeing them, but as expected, it's still stimulating for me. Is it stimulating? Charming? Perhaps, alluring?) While thinking about things like that, Naga looked at Yuuki, who was about to swing her magic made wind blade.

The wind around the girl danced and the sound of the cutting wind was heard.

Without any effort, the branches were cut and the fallen tree quickly changed

into a log.

“Alright, done.”

Once Yuuki stepped back, Cu, who was waiting, began.

The tips of the many leather belts that she wore squirmed and rose into the air. At a glance it looked as though a number of snakes were twisting and twining about her body.

Because many of those leather belts left, much of her skin became exposed.

Looking erotic is one thing, however, when her belts squirming in the air are looked at, they give off an impression of snakes.

(I greatly welcome the fact that the skin exposure increased, but her appearance is kind of eerie, and it makes it difficult to appreciate the view. It would be nice if she could undress without giving off that feeling.) Naga assumed an impression, which one couldn't tell whether it was due to his convenience or his rudeness.

As Cu stood in front of the log, the multiple leather belts wriggled and arranged themselves in the air all at once, just like snakes would crook their necks.

Then they swiftly spread.

Should one say they spread? Since the belts came apart, wouldn't it be better to say they became longer?

Once the part of her belts that twined around her body came apart, the other parts which floated in the sky would automatically stretch.

Nearly 10 leather belts that were more than 3 meters long extended out into space and squirmed around her body.

(This is a...somewhat sinister view.) -Is what Naga thought while his body shook a little.

If people who didn't know what was happening were to see this, they would certainly be unable to stand due to fear.

Cu manipulated the numerous leather belts squirming in mid-air easily and

coiled them around the logs while raising them. The logs were floating in the air.

The logs, which were 189-216 meters in length and half a meter thick, were floating in the air while being supported by leather belts.

She carried them to the gathering spot, which was a short distance away, and put them down on the ground. The leather belts were released from the logs.

Until now, not even a quarter of an hour has passed since Ais stood in front of the trees.

Without thinking Naga said:

“Hey Hey, amazing, you’re amazing. Aren’t you doing the same amount of work as 20 lumberjacks?”

He raised his voice in surprise and admiration.

Then, Yuuki flared at him as usual.

“Don’t be stupid!”

“What are you angry about? I was praising you?”

“I, together with Ais and Cu aren’t doing the same amount as 20 lumberjacks. We work with the speed of around 50 lumberjacks! At least know how to evaluate properly, will you!?”

“Aa... so that was the problem?”

“Hmph, it should be fine as long you understand. Well then Ais, let’s move to the next one.”

While brandishing her arm, Yuuki stepped up to Ais.

Having a small wry smile Ais slightly bowed towards Naga. He lightly raised his arm as if trying to convey ‘I don’t mind, so Ais, you shouldn’t as well’

“Naga-san, you seem to be quite troubled there.”

Cu, who moved near Naga’s side, chuckled while speaking.

Because the leather belts returned to their original form, twining around her body, Naga was thankful to be able to survive without having to be surrounded

by those squirming snakes.

“W...Well, you could say that, but until now there was not a single man in your group. Because I joined up with you, it can’t be helped that Yuuki hates me. It seems that girl holds a heavy grudge against men. More importantly, are you fine with this? For a man, with unknown origins, to join you.”

“Harri-nee seems to know about humans but as for us, we still don’t know much. Therefore I have no reason to hate you.”

Because Cu’s words are always curt, Naga needed to supply the rest of her sentences by himself.

(In the end, this girl can probably say things, like not liking nor hating, because she doesn’t know much about humans.... still...) Naga, who stood next to her, bent the upper part of his body as if peeking at Cu’s face.

“But the humans are trying to annihilate you, right?”

“Of course, I hate those humans who try to utterly destroy us. Even so, I have no reason to hate those who don’t try to do that. Humans who try to help us, I like them. That’s why, I like Naga-san.”



Naga opened his mouth widely.

“O, Oh is that so?”

“And if you are able to repel the Cassandra Kingdom's army, I'll like you even more.”

“Yay, is that so, is that so? Well, I better do my best to make you take an even greater interest in me.”

Cu directed her eyes at him as if looking for an answer.

“Can you win?”

As expected, there was probably still some anxiety in some corners of her heart.

(Well, that's true. No matter what you say, we only have 20 people to face an enemy of 2000 soldiers.) (Well, I wonder about that) – Naga tilted his head deliberately as if saying that.

“Certainly, in battle it's typically quantity rather than quality. However, there's no way to say that the smaller force will definitely lose. In the end, it's about preparations and tactics. That will decide the outcome of the battle. What's more, there's no need for us to face the enemy head on with everything we have, is there?”

“?”

Cu tilted her head.

“Depending on how we do it, if we take down a single part of the enemy's forces, we can stop them from advancing. Assuming we can take down the enemy's general, it's possible for us to force them into a defeat.”

Cu, who didn't seem to understand the meaning behind Naga's words, only looked at him fixedly with her upturned yes “Well, I cannot guarantee that we will win, but, it's not like we are giving up from the beginning, thinking that we will lose. In the first place, until now, haven't you fought with the human army while being outnumbered?”

Thinking about how to take Naga's words, Cu nodded while saying ‘that's

right’.

The moment she tried to say something

“Hey Cu! What are you doing, stop messing around!”

From the opposite site, Yuuki’s voice was heard, which made Cu turn her head.

“If you skip out on your duty, despite me and Ais desperately working, I won't forgive you!”

“Sorry.”

“Look, more logs are done, so transport them quickly.”

Cu, who turned her head back ran away from Naga’s side.

Watching her retreating back he turned his head, his eyes met with Yuuki who had a fierce and angry expression.

“You too! Don’t just start conversations with other girls with that perverted, lecherous face.”

(This girl, why is she angry about something which isn’t related to her?)

Naga shrugged his shoulders while raising his hands.

“Yeah, got it.”

“Hmph!” – Yuki turned her face away and returned to her work while stomping.

“Good grief” – Once he turned back around, he saw the gallant figure of Cu lifting the long, thick logs.

(That girl sure can do amazing things. Even though that log is much heavier than she is, how does she maintain her balance? Is it because of the magic that such things don’t matter to her?) Naga, who was constantly surprised by their magic until now, thought of suitable fighting methods for the witches.

Were they to be used in the same way as the people who couldn’t use magic, it would be the same as throwing pearls before swine; in other words, it would be the same as not making use of the magic’s effectiveness.

“What this situation needs is something like this: ‘if you know your enemies and know yourself, you can win a hundred battles without a single loss’, right?... What the, again it’s Sun Tzu? Sun Tzu, Sun Tzu, who was that again?”

Even though Naga was about to clearly remember some things, in the end, he couldn’t.

Feeling vexed, Naga cursed himself a little.

“Un, I wonder if it’s supposed to be like this?”

Naga turned his face toward Yuuki’s voice

At the gathering point, where the part of the forest opened up, ten-odd logs were lined up.

Cu was about to bring the last two.

Within a short time, Ais and Yuuki managed to lumber this amount of trees and cut off the branches.

(Hahaha, indeed they are working at the speed of 50 lumberjacks.)

Naga, who was trying to suppress his laughter, drew near their side.

“Excellent, next, we’re going to cut these!”

Yuuki announced with a loud voice.

Once Ais and Cu moved back, Yuuki faced towards Naga.

“You too. It’s dangerous, so step back. If you get injured, I won’t care, you know?”

“Oh? Are you actually worried about me? I feel honored.”

“Don’t be s-stu-stupid. It’s not like I’m worried about or anything. Because you will become an obstacle to my work, I’m telling you to go over there!”

On the other side, Ais smiled bitterly while putting her hands together as if begging.

“Yeah, I got it. I’ll distance myself so as not to become a hindrance.”

“You should have done that much from the beginning!”

‘Shoo shoo’ – Yuuki, who drove Naga away while shooing with her hand,

quickly assumed a serious expression. She closed her eyes and concentrated her magic “Cut through evil, cut through space, cut through eyes, cut through the truth. Search for the enemy’s weakness and cut them. Omit their forte! Use the standing enemy as your shield and cut them. Release the seal from the Wind God and entertain his blade of wind!”

the wind revolved around Yuuki, making a whistling sound.

A gust of wind ran through hitting the logs.

The logs, which were close to a meter in thickness, were severed into two perfect halves near the center.

Next, she increased the number of wind blades to 2, and released them each toward the two severed pieces of the log.

Again, the logs were cut.

With that, a single log was divided into 4 parts.

Yuuki controlled her wind blade and continued to cut even further.

Eventually, the log, which were about a meter in the length, was divided into 24 individual parts.

they were of irregular sizes due to measured by sight, still, Naga didn’t care about that.

Cu, who was skillfully manipulating her leather belts, quickly collected the divided logs.

She lifted all 24 parts at once.

A single leather belt wrapped around 1,2,3 logs and raised them up at the same time.

The parts of the belts that were stretching into the air were more than 3 meters long.

This caused the belts around her body to become short, inevitably exposing much of her skin.

Naga’s eyes were stolen away by the gallant figure - and the exposed skin – of Cu, who was carrying many small logs at once. Thus she continued transporting

the logs to the opposite site of the gathering area as usual and put them down on the ground.

She placed the short logs in a cross-like manner.

When the small logs, which only reached the height of a person's lower back, were lined up. The 5 witches that were waiting gathered near the logs.

The girls were holding Natas and small swords.

Despite Yuuki having cut off the branches, due to her prioritizing speed, the work was only done roughly, so there were still some branch nubs remaining.

The girls shaved them off with natas and short swords and smoothed the surfaces. In order to increase the flow of magic, it's better for its target to have a smooth surface.

For that reason, this was necessary work. But because it was a type of job that could only be done by hand, it was basically just manual labor.

Even the witches wouldn't use their magic here.

Therefore, they used thick cloth to cover their arms and legs in order to protect their skin.

Once the five of them adjusted the shapes of the logs, Ais and Yuuki, who finished lumbering trees and making logs joined them followed by Cu who finished transporting them.

Holding a nata, Naga, too, joined the work.

With only one hour having passed, hundreds of small logs were made.

"Please, someone go call Harrigan" – As Naga said so, Ais answered with 'alright' and dashed towards the fort.

Several of the witches took some of the small logs and lined them up in a vacant space. Next, they put some wooden sticks shaved from the fallen branches next to them. From now on, it was Harrigan's turn.

She arranged the small logs with some of her hair, at the same time combining some of her hair with the sticks and the logs.

Then, once she inserted her magic, the finely made wooden sticks attached to

the log, creating a mini-sized wooden puppet the log was the body, while the attached sticks were arms and legs.

At the bottom side of a 0.9-1 meter-long log, there were 2 short, thick rods (legs) growing out and supporting its main trunk.

Two thin wooden rods that corresponded to a pair of arms protruded from the upper part of the log. From there, parts that resembled forearms and elbows branched off into tips.

The elbow joints were connected using her hair, and from the elbow, the forearms moved separately.

At the ends of the arms, if one were to look closer, three long and finely made branches were attached. In other words, those were the fingers.

If one was to say it honestly, its appearance was ugly.

It was an awkward shape, which made even the witches doubt whether they could fight with something like this.

However, Naga was in a good mood.

“Whatever shape it has, it’s fine. However ugly it is, as long it can follow our orders effectively, I couldn’t care less about its looks. Speaking of which, Harrigan, won’t you try to move it? I want to confirm whether or not you can move well enough, otherwise, we won’t be able to throw them into battle.”

“Yeah, I got it. Lela bring that thing.”

Because Harrigan and Lela didn’t participate in making the logs, nor in making the wooden puppet, they wore clothes, which, as usual, had lots of exposure. Nevertheless, Naga didn’t move his sight toward that, instead, he stared at the wooden puppet.

If that wooden puppet didn’t move as Harrigan instructed, Naga’s plan would collapse.

Will that thing move according to their wishes? Will it possess the offensive power he needed? Naga focused all his thoughts on that.

“Yes, Ane-sama....”

As soon as Lela held out the bow they had prepared beforehand, Harrigan took it and brought it to the puppet.

“Well then, shall we try it out? Make some room!”

At Harrigan’s command, the witches all took a step back.

While imagining the puppet’s movements inside her head, she continued to circulate the magic inside her body.

After circulating a sufficient amount of magic, Harrigan whispered her commands for the doll’s movement. The small puppet moved its legs to and fro as it began to advance unsteadily while shaking its torso.

“Pfft!”

Seeing its funny movements, Kay snorted without realizing it. Harrigan glared at her and she hurriedly turned away.

The other witches’ expressions weren’t as obvious as Kay’s but they watched attentively as the wooden puppet staggered with eyes filled with anxiety as if saying – ‘Will it be really fine?’.

Once it moved a certain distance, Harrigan sent a new order.

As the wooden puppet ceased to move, it skillfully drew the bow and nocked an arrow.

“Fire!”

Immediately after Harrigan sharply commanded it, the sound of the arrow cutting through the air was heard.

“Ohhh”

“Heeh?”

“Heh?”

“Incredible.”

The other witches gave out voices of joy and surprise.

Naga, who was watching from the front, waved his hand and called with a loud voice.

“How was that, Ais?”

Ais, who was standing 30 yards away on the other side, waved back.

“It doesn’t seem like there’s any problem with its power, and there’s no doubt it’s enough to deal a fatal injury.”

As Ais answered, the witches who were listening erupted into joyous chattering.

Today, Naga once again wore his colorful sword, with its handle wrapped in crimson cloth, and its blade sheathed inside a vermillion scabbard on the left side of his hip. While holding its pommel Naga rushed to Harrigan’s side.

Because the sword was loosely attached, if he runs or jumps, it would shake and become a nuisance.

Unlike the witches, Naga’s body didn’t bounce while he ran.

He ran without raising his feet, as if he was sliding.

Once he stood in front of Harrigan he said:

“It seems that it went well, doesn’t it?”

Harrigan nodded in agreement.

“If it’s about shooting, then I can somehow manage it, but, I think it might be impossible for me to aim accurately...”

“That’s fine. Either way, the enemy will be glued to each other. The important thing is not to hit a target with a single shot, rather, it’s shooting in great numbers. Even a clumsily operated gun....will kill if many shots reach its target.....hm?”

“A gun?”

“Eh...no...a gun....what was that again??”

While frowning his eyebrows, he pondered.

“No, it seemed for a moment that I could recall something, but, it seems that I was only able recall some kind of feeling in my hands. It was profoundly heavy and certain, I learned about it...”

In front of his chest, Naga mimed holding something in both of his hands while tilting his head.

“Damn, it won’t work?”

Breathing out a single sigh, Naga put both his hands down listlessly.

“It seemed like I would recall just a little bit, but, well... that’s fine. If I pose one more time, I might be able to do it. It seems to be something like squatting when you take a dump, doesn’t it?”

“That’s quite a dirty example.”

Harrigan frowned her eyebrows but Naga kept his calm face.

“Is that so? I get frustrated whenever there’s something I start to remember and then it escapes me even in moments like this despite saying that I was about to recall something.

“If you say a dirty thing like that..”

'Haha' – Naga laughed with an easygoing attitude.

“More importantly, my point is that the number of shots is what matters. There’s no need for an accurate aim, so you should only focus on that.”

On the other hand, Harrigan still had a serious face.

“That’s right. We were able to pick up the weapons that the soldiers left while fleeing. The amount doesn’t seem to be a problem, but there’s still the question of how many puppets I can control.”

“Regarding that, it should be fine if we check it out now. If it’s unstable or uncertain, we just need to practice.”

“Don’t make it sound so easy. The only one practicing would be me.”

Naga nodded with a very stern face.

“It will be fine, Harrigan. If it’s you, then you can do it. I have faith in you.”

(Is he saying it honestly, or mocking me?)

Harrigan gave a weak, wry smile.

“I’m thankful for your belief in me.”

“If you can’t do it, continue to practice until you can.”

Harrigan eyebrows shot up and she snapped while pointing at Naga

“Do you believe in me or not!? You’re making me nervous!”

“No no, because it’s the vital part of our strategy, I need to have you do whatever it takes for it to succeed.”

“Ahh, I got it.”

After answering, Harrigan looked at the big group of miniature puppets, which were lined up on the ground.

“Anyway, shouldn’t you first try it with ten of them?”

In the end the total amount of wooden puppets increased to 300.

Once they confirmed it, it turned out that Harrigan was capable of controlling 60 or 70 wooden puppets of this size, and if she tried her hardest she could even manage 80.

Despite that, it was not possible for her to make them do complicated tasks while also commanding each separately. Commanding them to repeat simple actions alone was something that required all her energy. Nevertheless, It was reassuring for her to be able to move 60 or 70 of them.

Assuming she failed to precisely command 60-70 puppets, as long as there were a large amount of attacks and targets, it would be a success anyways.

Even though the puppets were small and didn’t seem fearsome in appearance, they were quite a threat.

Among the witches, there were still some who doubted whether they could obtain victory because of how shabby the puppets looked. However, Naga didn’t care.

(I could care less about their appearance, rather, if the enemy makes light of them because of their appearance, it would be welcome.) If they thought ‘such a thing can’t hurt us’ the chances that the enemy will be taken in by this misconception would be high.

This is what Naga predicted.

“Well then” – Naga said as he raised his head, looking around.

“There seems to be a future in making the wooden puppets and Harrigan controlling them with magic. With that, the next thing would be to check the other witches’ work. Shall I go take a look?”

Currently, Harrigan was occupied with practice.

Leaving her at the fort, Naga decided to go and see the progress of everyone else’s work.

This is where the horses that the enemy left behind came in handy.

Witches who had fast legs, Ais for instance, would run by themselves.

Yuuki, who is a wind magic user, could operate the wind and ride on her board, which she would call her Air Board, to travel between the fort and the base.

However, Naga didn’t have any confidence that he could run to the base.

Saying so, if he were to go there and return, it would probably take him half a day. Therefore, it was very inefficient.

However, because there were the horses left by the enemy, he could arrive at the place in a short time. There’s no way he wouldn’t use them.

Since it is necessary to move swiftly during battle Naga thought it would be better to ride a horse.

He picked out several mounts, from the group of horses, that seemed fast, and took his time practicing horse riding.

Rather than practice, it was more like remembering the feeling of riding, or better to say recalling his skills?

Riding on the horse, Naga rode around the fort’s walls, in the forest, and the moor.

Seeing how he looked while riding, Harrigan was filled with admiration.

“Fumu, as expected of what you said, aren’t your horse riding skills quite splendid? With that, you would probably be fine while riding on the paths inside the forest. Should we try to domesticate horses once again?”

Great amounts of money was required to get horses.

It would be possible to obtain them through an exchange of goods, but for now, there were other precious items which they needed more.

But, because the enemy left the horses, there was no need to prepare money.

It should be fine to look for someone who would be in charge of raising them.

“Doing it immediately won’t be possible, but, If we win this battle, shall we once again try to raise horses? Ikushina and Mimone seem to have taken a liking to the horses.”

Just as Harrigan said, among the witches, there were those who showed an interest in the horses.

Even the two witches – Ikushina and Mimone, who were enthusiastic, requested that Naga teach them while trying their best to ride the horses.

Since the two of them had good comprehension, they learned it quickly.

Despite not being able to ride as fast as Naga, if it was a plain, they would keep pace without falling behind.

At that time, Harrigan too felt a little more enthusiastic from watching those two.

“Should I try practicing a little bit of horse riding?”

Such a feeling welled up inside of her.

To begin with though, one had to have suitable clothes for riding a horse .

Were she to mount the horse in her usual outfit, her thighs and buttocks' skin would be immediately rubbed raw.

Mimone and Ikushina would wear hakama with voluminous sleeves that were unlike the witches’ usual clothing while delightfully galloping on the horses. Nevertheless, Harrigan had no interest in their clothes.

Naga, assisted by Mimone and Ikushina, ran through the moor and reached the upper stream of the schwein river.

The source of the river was located deep inside the black forest.

The Schwein river which was amassed from rain and subterranean streams would flow through the forest and reach the edge of a plateau. Once it reaches that point, a head of water in form of a 120-130 yards long waterfall will appear, from which the river will fall at once into a plain.

Because there is a great distance between the cliff and the basin, when a strong wind blows at the time there's a scarce amount of water, the falling water would be blown away, unable to reach the waterfall lake.

Whenever such days continue, the schwein river would dry up; recently though, the quantity of water upstream became abundant thanks to the heavy rainfall.

After it falls from the plateau to the moor, the river would freely flow to the northeast while meandering.

The unique features of that river would become the second stage of his two-stage preparations for the battle.

This part was also a difficult task to be done by Ais and Yuuki.

Similarly to the time when Harrigan controlled the small puppets, the two of them cut down the forest trees around where the river was flowing down from the plateau.

However, unlike before this time they didn't segment the logs.

They would only have Yuuki cut off the branches with her wind magic.

The logs that had their branches removed would float on the river, go with its stream and fall from the waterfall.

Because the waterfall lake was big and deep, the logs wouldn't split and break when falling from such a great height. As long there was no strong wind, the logs would crash and sink into the lake without getting split, then float on the water.

After that, The floating logs would be carried to the bottom part of the river while being carried by the current flowing out from the lake.

One after another, the floating logs were collected by Nonoeru, who was waiting several ligas(E/D: likely, a local measure of distance in this world, like

meters or feet) away from the waterfall lake.

Nonoeru, whose main specialty was water magic, controlled the flow of the river and stopped the logs.

The stream was narrow there, so the current was faster and the water was deeper than usual.

The fast flow of the river eroded both of its banks, creating a somewhat small canyon in that vicinity.

What Nonoeru was doing was piling up and connecting the floated logs, as well as trying to dam up the flow of the river.

Because it was natural for the piled logs to have some gaps remaining, it was not possible to completely dam up the river.

At the time when Naga revealed his tactics, Nonoeru was able to identify that problem, but still, he replied with: "It's fine, rather, it will be much better that way."

"The soldiers from Cassandra's army will probably suspect something if the water stream is completely blocked and dried up. Still, if the water level is lower than usual, they will just consider it lower than usual. To begin with-was it called Schwein?- there's no way for them to observe it on a daily routine, so they shouldn't be able to tell if there's little or much water with just a glance? Or am I wrong?"

Saying so, he looked at Harrigan, who nodded with 'Hm, I see'.

"Indeed, if the river dries up, they will no doubt be thinking 'what is the matter', but they probably won't suspect much of anything as long there were no downpours from earlier and they'll probably think that this much of a reduced water level is normal."

At the same time Nonoeru, who was focusing, was piling up the logs while creating a dam.

Still, no matter how good she was at controlling the water, there was no way for her to accurately place the logs.

When it comes to positioning them delicately and finely, it can be only done

by manual labor. Even joining them together and reinforcing could only be done by hand.

The one who had the power to do that was, again, Ais with her monstrous power. Using magic to enhance her body, Ais dove inside the river and grabbed the logs placed by Nonoeru while raising, moving and joining them as she adjusted the dam.

Did her lung capacity also increase thanks to the magic enhancement? Ais could dive without problems for a short time.

Because a dam, which was made from just joining the logs together, wasn't able to maintain its strength, Ais would sometimes bring big rocks from nearby, and use them as a reinforcement material to put around the logs.

Her figure, which raised the logs that were thicker than her own body, singlehandedly, was incredible. Not just that, she also lifted up rocks which were far heavier and larger than herself above her head with little effort.

Despite that, what was more beautiful was Ais' outfit.

Due to her displaying the maximum effect of her magic, she became much more slender than normal, and her clothes, which from the start, covered little of her skin covered even less because of the water soaking them.

Her soaked clothing was glued to her skin, furthermore, they seemed to be semi-transparent. It somehow gave her figure more charm.

The reason why Naga came here everyday was half due to checking the progress of the dam making and half due to him wanting to admire Ais's alluring body. Such were the circumstances.

The appearance of Ais, who was moving the logs inside the cold water while ignoring Naga's gaze, became the target of other witches' silent encouragement and admonishment.

Even if there were witches who didn't wholly trust Naga or his tactics, seeing how Ais took the initiative while working hard couldn't help but make them think 'Ais is doing her best with that, so we have to work properly too.'

Ais thought this might happen, which Naga took notice of and understood.

(That girl, she seems to be gentle but is actually quite scary. Even so she's rather intelligent, isn't she? On top of that, she can look after others. Truly, she's one capable girl.) Naga was deeply admiring her alluring body as Ais was working with all her might inside the river.



Today, because the dam was almost complete, the river upstream was gathering quite a large amount of water.

Right now, in the last stage of the operation, the other witches were reinforcing the logs by tying them up with ropes while diving together with Ais.

The river upstream continued to swell with water, while the water downstream of the dam continued to decrease.

Naturally, there were small gaps in the dam and drainage holes made at the top of it, so even if the water reaches too high, it will flow down from them. Therefore, there was no need to worry about the river drying up.

The accumulated river water changed its color to a bluish-green from the nearly transparent blue as the water depth kept increasing.

Naga looked down at that view and nodded with satisfaction while standing on the edge of the river bank, which had become one level higher.

However, was he satisfied because the dam was finished faster than he thought? Or was it because he could feast his eyes on the sight of all the witches with their thin soaked clothing? One could not tell.

(It's probably both)

Standing next to him, Lela was peeking at the side of his face while thinking so.

'That aside' – Thought Lela as she looked at the dam being completed before her eyes.

(Where did idea of damming up a river for the sake of a battle come from?

Was it his original idea? or was it a precedent used in the history of wars in his world?

Perhaps this is a precedent, isn't, it. However.)

The plan of making those miniature-sized puppets was probably what he came up with on his own.

Since he said magic doesn't exist in his world, a tactic based on the use of magic shouldn't be something he could learn from his past military history.

And then of course, this way of fighting wasn't something he could have experienced before.

Despite that, if it's this method, one could use it to defeat an enemy with superior numbers.

(Hm, I wonder about, this. We won't know unless we see it in practice, still, wouldn't considering that especially after the outcome of a battle be more thrilling, I won-der.) Was Naga's strategy, which used the small wooden puppets operated by magic and was more akin to "deceit", something that was commonly used in his world?

In this world, where the concept of facing each other directly was common, it was unheard for the outnumbered side to counter with a clever plan.

At least not to this extent.

Just as he said: 'In battle, quantity is more important than quality' this meant that usually the outcome of a battle would be decided by the greater number of soldiers.

It was more common for the outnumbered forces to avoid open battle and turn it into a siege.

So as to make up for their lack of numbers, the witches would make free use of their specialty, which was magic, to fight against their opponents. Even so, they would still be taking their enemies attacks head on.

(To think that such a method of making up for our lack of numbers existed.)

Because even Lela, who was a bookworm among the other witches thought so the other witches would be completely shocked.

No, even Lela was shocked.

Rather, she was probably the one to receive the greatest shock.

(I'm becoming more and more interested in that per-son, as well as in this person's world.) Lela again glanced at the side of his face but, he was no longer watching the river.

Naga, who raised his face, was looking upwards.

Lela followed his sight, but, there was nothing there.

What she saw was a blue sky stretching outwards, with clouds floating here and there.

What could he possibly be looking at? Or was he just looking at the sky?

Being concerned about that, Lela asked him.

“What are you looking for Naga-sa~n?”

“Hm?”

Naga slowly turned to face her.

Once he looked at her, his stern expression was replaced with a faint smile.

Regardless of that smile, it appeared to Lela as though a little trace of loneliness was lingering on his face.

(Could it be that what he was looking for wasn't the view of this world, but the one from his previous wo-rld? Is he missing the world where he came from?) Naga, who had lost his memory of his previous world, should probably be having some vague reminiscence.

Nevertheless, Naga, who had a faint smile on his face, shook his head while saying 'Nothing in particular'.

“I just thought that the blue sky was pretty.”

(Is he trying to deceive me? Well that's fine. I'll have you show what you see sooner or la-ter) “More importantly, Lela.”

“Ye-s?”

“You're not helping with the construction of the dam, are you?”

“Because I'm bad at dealing with manual wo-rk, I can make things late-r. Burning and destroying is my main forte, bu-t.”

“Kuhaha”

Naga's smiling face clearly seemed to be more pleasant than what it was before.

“You are just like the other guys.”

Saying so, he faced toward the river, where the witches were diving and working.

“I am glad that you guys are wearing such tight, thin clothing while diving in the water, but well....”

“Ah...was that s-o?”

(Being told such things, I’m getting concerned about this person’s si-gh-t.)

Despite not entering the water, they would wear thin clothing which exposed lots of skin.

Not just Lela, but everyone was like that as well. Still, being told that made her become self conscious.

Lela, who had a bit of a red face, turned away so as not to be noticed.

“Rather than tha-t”

“What?”

“Were you able to recollect something?”

“That’s right, I wonder.”

Putting both of his hands behind his head, he again looked up at the sky.

“If my memory is faint.....I can somehow recall this and that, but were I to describe them in detail, I wouldn’t be sure about that.”

“Is that s-o?”

“Once I manage to recollect something, I’ll tell you. I promise.”

“I’m looking forward to tha-t”

Turning his face back again, he slowly faced Lela.

As if bantering something, a shallow smile appeared on his face.

“That’s interesting indeed. My world shouldn’t be that fun.....despite that”

Hearing Naga that way, Lela answered with a serious expression.

“I think it’s more fun for Naga-san to learn about things you don’t know, rather than the world where Naga-san was in.”

His expression turned into a mysterious one.

“You really are a strange girl, aren’t you?”

“Being told that by you, makes me feel like ‘I wonder’, bu-t.”

“Kuhaha. You’re saying some interesting things.”

Lela puffed up her cheeks in dissatisfaction.

“Well, let’s put aside my previous world. Because I’m here, I will only do what I ought to. I will only fulfill my bestowed duty.”

“Your bestowed du-ty?”

“I believe in neither gods nor buddhas, but... hm? Buddhas... Buddhas, what was that?”

“No, even If I’m aske-d.”

“hm...”

Folding his arms while bending his neck, Naga pondered.

'Ga' -he raised his face a little bit.

A relieved expression appeared on his face.

“Did you recollect something?”

Lela braced herself as she asked.

“No, not at all.”

Lela staggered and lost her balance.

“The fact that I can say these words is proof that the inside of my head is packed with the things of the other world. Despite saying that I lost my memories, it’s just that I can’t recollect, rather than them vanishing. If so, I’ll probably remember sooner or later.”

(As expected of him. He has a positive attitude... doesn’t he?)

“Well, whatever the situation with my memories is, If we don’t win this battle, there will be no future for you. If you disappear then I’ll disappear with you.”

Naga was talking about sharing one’s lot with another.

At these words, Lela felt deeply impressed.

“Yes, I want to wi-n.”

While saying so, her face became radiant.

But despite that, his facial expression unexpectedly turned serious.

“Regarding winning, there will be many more battles waiting ahead of us. The war won’t just end with 1 or 2 victories. We will probably end up doing nothing but continuing to fight. Perhaps, it would be more pleasant to lose that way. Still, you want to win?”

Lela gulped her saliva with a sound, then:

“I want to wi-n. I want to see the future and the world, which lies ahead of victorie-s.”

“Yeah, me too. Therefore, let’s win. Once you win, grasp the future using your own hands.”

“Ye-s.”

Both Lela and Naga were fired up with pleasant feelings.

“Arara, the two of you look like you’re having lots of fun, aren’t you?”

Hearing Ais’ voice from behind them, the two of them froze while gulping.

As Naga and Lela turned back shyly, Ais, whose body was completely wet, stared at them with her usual smiling face, Ais’ thin, wet clothing was transparent and sticking to her skin, giving off a nice feeling. Somehow, it looked more erotic than her naked form.... Nevertheless, the cramping and twitching veins, which appeared on her forehead repeatedly, made her look scary.

Even for Naga, there was no time to admire her voluptuous figure.

Lela, who knew about how fearsome Ais was, to the extent where she was terrified, tottered while having her legs shaking.

“While we were doing our best, While we were doing our best! While we were doing our best!! Because it is important I said it 3 times, but, Naga-san and Lela, don’t you seem to be chatting enjoyably? That’s nice, isn’t it? For you to to

be having this much fun.”

“No no no no no”

“No no no no no”

Naga and Lela trembled as they shook their heads and palms in front of their faces.

“Obviously, you’re fired up to help, right, Lela?”

“Na...natural-ly”

“Is that so? In that case, please help us with the finishing touches.”

As Ais reached out both of her arms, she lightly shoved Naga’s shoulders.

“Wha?”

Within the blink of an eye, she also pushed Lela’s shoulders

“...Eh?”

The 2 of them fell upside down in the direction of a few yards-wide dam lake, not as big as a real lake though, and immediately fell in the water with a gaudy sound, creating a splash.

Naga, who emerged with his face from the water, reached the river bank while desperately swimming. He faced toward Ais, who was peeking in his direction, and shouted: “Hey Ais, just what are you doing?!”

Because Naga’s clothes consisted of a hakama and full sleeves, it couldn’t be helped that his clothing became heavy while soaked, which was difficult for him. Despite that, the fact that he could stay afloat without trouble was proof that he had quite a lot of experience in swimming.

Ais, who was looking down, suddenly jumped into the air.

“kasploosh”

Next to to Naga, who looked up with surprise, Ais fell while making a big splash of water.

“Kpsh”

Having his face splashed with the water, Naga unintentionally leaned

backwards.

The wave created due to the shock soaked his body from top to bottom.

(That's an amazing splash. Speaking of which, that girl, could it be she's heavier than...) "Is there anything you want to say Naga-san?"

Immediately emerging through the water's surface, Ais treaded water as she asked him with a smile.

(That's why, your face is scary)

"No, it's nothing. By the way, should I help with something?"

"There's not much to do, so it should be fine with you helping me get out from the water."

"What?!"

Naga once again leaned backwards.

"Despite saying help, it was you who pushed me down!"

"I thought about it, but, once I considered it thoroughly I noticed that you couldn't help me with the work."

"T...This girl...."

Being under the surface of the water, Naga clenched his fist unconsciously.

"To be honest, despite us working with all our might inside the water, you and Lela were just chatting with each other enjoyably, which made me feel just a bit annoyed."

"Thank you for your honest opinion!"

"Because Lela has already gotten out of the water, Naga-san too, please get out."

As he turned around to look, he noticed that Lela went up the bank in no time.

"Is it fine to not help you?"

"Yes. Rather, Naga-san will become a hindrance, so please get out quickly, will you?"

“This girl... I’ve had enough”

(Still, to think that this girl, who gives off a big sister vibe, would pull such a prank.) Being able to see her unexpected(?) side, Naga’s mood notably improved.

Nevertheless, Naga had the feeling he would be scolded and considered a nuisance were he to stay in the water any longer.

Using his overarm strokes, Naga swam near the bank.

His clothes, which were damp with water, coiled around his body, making it hard for him to move.

The main cause of his hindered movements, was him being soaked which made his clothes weigh his body down.

Despite that, Naga swam and got out from the river bank as if they didn’t affect him at all.

“Good grief, I’ve gone through a bitter experience. What should I do? At this rate, I won’t be able to ride a horse.”

As he looked down with a pathetic face at his soaked clothes

“I’ll start a fire, so wai-t.”

Lela called out to him.

As he turned his head around, Lela, who was completely wet, collected the wooden fragments that were lying around.

In order to pile and join the logs together, Ais punched and crushed the ones which didn’t match in length and thickness in order to adjust them, resulting in these fragments.

- achoo*



Lela, whose body was slightly trembling being damp and cold, gave out a small sneeze.

Naga smiled unintentionally as he associated her soaked appearance with that of a small puppy.

(somehow she looks cute. No, her soaked clothes look alluring, indeed, but... w, wait!) “Hey Lela”

“Wh-at?”

“Your charms might be wet, are they alright? Can you set up a fire using them?”

“They should be fine even if they’re w-et, but, it will be hard to write on them, so it might become a bit of a problem”

Part 2

As she took out a single soaked charm from her waist she retrieved her pen, which acted as a hair ornament, and wrote something.

After that, she incanted a short chant, and the charm in her hand burned faintly.

“The fire is a bit we-ak.” (Hm, I see. So it’s not because of the chant being soaked, but rather, how clearly she can write on it? Interesting indeed.) As he silently pondered, the wooden fragments, gathered by the river bank burst into flames.

“Oh, it lit up?” “Well, naturally.” “Then, shall we dry our clothes?”

Once Naga took off his hakama and voluminous sleeves and spread them out next to the campfire set on the rocky riverside.

“Wha, what are you doing all of a sudden?” Lela shouted out as she turned her face away.

“Asking what I am doing, if you don’t dry them fast, you won’t be able to. The sun will soon be setting, so you might catch a cold if you continue to wear those wet clothes. Shouldn’t you strip and dry your clothes too?”

(Does he intend to strip m-e?)

“I...I’ll be fi-ne. Even without doing anything, they will dry fast. So if I just expose myself to the fire, they should dry before you know it.” “Is that so? fine, but...” Naga quickly withdrew.

(Was, I wrong?)

“Araarara, oh dear, oh dear, the two of you are having fun as always aren’t you?”

Ais’ voice called out from the water and the two froze and gulped.

They turned around to see Ais' smiling face sticking out of the water.

"Nonononono, wait wait wait. In the first place, the reason we're wet is because you pushed us into the water, right?"

Once he stood up, Naga walked to the river side. He put his hands on his hips and glared at Ais below him.

She stuck out her hands defensively and furtively glanced away.

"Err... that's right, I'm sorry for that. That's why, could you please stop striking that daunting pose?"

"Hm?"

After Naga looked down at his body, he realized he was only wearing a loincloth.

It was impossible for Ais not to be troubled.

"Ahh, I'm sorry for this."

Saying so, Naga tried to step back.

"Ah, stay there, stay there."

Said a voice.

As he looked in its direction, Kay, who was floating next to Ais, waved her hand towards him.

"Naga-san, it seems that your clothes are wet, so won't you come for a swim? Even if you keep waiting there absentmindedly for the clothes to dry, it won't help."

"Wait Kay, what are you saying?"

Ais looked at her in reprimand but Kay replied with composure:

"Isn't it fine? It seems that the work is almost done, so even if we take a small break, so what? Speaking of which, I do want to take a small break. What about the rest of you?"

"Yes, me too! Me too!"

As soon as Mimone lifted her hand, everyone around her raised their voices

one after another.

“Because we’ve been doing our best since morning, let us at least have a break, Ais.”

“That’s right.... But, assuming it’s fine to take a rest, I wonder about you inviting Naga. Won’t it be bothersome for him?”

“Naga-san, are you bothered?”

“No, I’m not bothered in particular. Rather, I’d also like to take a break.”

“If so, isn’t it fine, Ais?”

“I see.”

As Ais was pondering, Kay delivered the final blow.

“Isn’t it only Ais and Lela that are having fun while playing around with Naga-san? I want to play with Naga-san too.”

“S, Since when was I having fun with him?”

“Eh? Just a moment ago, didn’t you push Naga-san and Lela into the water for fun?”

“That’s right! That’s right!”

“It’s only Ais having fun, that’s unfair.”

“Speaking of which, Lela too.”

“Monopolizing is prohibited.”

Receiving attacks from all sides, Ais finally yielded.

“It can’t be helped, I guess. But you can only play for a little while though since we have to finish the dam today.”

“Got it, got it.”

“Ok~~, Naga-san, please come in.”

“Let’s swim, lets swim.”

“Let’s dive...”

The witches, who were floating inside of the lake made by the dam, waved

their hands, while calling out to him.

“Are you fine with that, Ais?”

As Naga was confirming with Ais, she answered with a sigh:

“Yes, it’s okay. But please restrain yourself, alright? To be more precise, something like stripping everyone’s clothes is no good, got it?”

“As if I would! Just what kind of person do you think I am?”

While floating upright inside the water, she tilted her head and answered: “A pervert?”

“Aren’t you being too honest?!”

Naga snapped. He pointed and yelled at Ais; then Kay waved her right hand, beckoning him.

“Hey, Naga-san, hurry, hurry.”

“Ooh, I’m coming”

Waving his hand, Naga looked at Lela next to him. “Won’t you swim?”

“I’ll restrain my-self. I don’t have much confidence in my swimming ability, that’s wh-y.”

“Is that so? Well then, please look after my clothes.”

As soon he said so, Naga lightly jumped from the rocky outcropping and cast his body above the lake’s surface.

Lela saw Naga and Ais swimming toward Kay and exhaled a small breath. Were she to express her real intentions, she did want to swim with them. Her swimming wasn’t as poor as she had said.

Nevertheless, she was worried about the fact that her usual thin clothing would get soaked and seen by others and embarrass her.

Rather, if someone like Lela were to wear only a loincloth and a chest covering similarly to Ais, one would think she’s obstinate in saying that this outfit is what one should wear when entering the water.

(...Am I embarrassed...?) That was a sensation, which she had never felt until

now.

Was it perhaps due to her being surrounded by witches, who were close to her age at the fort, as well as children and witches in charge of the nursing mothers in the village, that she had never seen a man from a close distance before?

(Somehow it's a refreshing feeling, isn't it?) It was just like her to analyze her feelings so calmly. But, despite her feeling a little bit embarrassed and not hating it, it was, again, a mysterious sensation.

(Is he mysterious or interesting? He's someone I cannot measure.)

Lela felt even more curious about Naga. She was strongly fascinated by the world he came from.

(Since Naga was able to arrive in this world, wouldn't it be possible to go to his world?) – She suddenly thought.

However, she decided not to focus on her thoughts too much for now. (This isn't something to think about right now.)

The battle with the army of Cassandra was quickly approaching.

Lela thought about the battle, which was approaching in a few more days. If they don't obtain victory, there will be nothing left for them. Not for herself. Not for the witches. And not even for Naga. There won't be a future.

The fact that Lela's body trembled might not be solely due to her feeling cold from getting wet.

She was afraid of the life and death battle that she was about to experience for the first time, and at the same time, she felt her heart beating as if burning up.

II Later that Day, Nighttime.

The witches gathered inside the largest room in the residential building of the fort. Because Yuuki went out for scouting and had just returned, bringing the important report, Harrigan rushed to call all the members for a meeting.

All the members sat in a circle on folding stools inside the room.

Not only the witches, but also Naga, who came back from the Schwein river, was there.

Actually, since this was a tactical meeting, it couldn't start without Naga.

"Yuuki, I'm sorry for making you repeat it, but I'll entrust you with explaining one more time."

After Harrigan's urging, Yuuki rose from her stool. "Yes, Ane-sama."

The other witches saw Yuuki's pale face and thought: 'this is it.'

From the start, Yuuki had flown to Fort Ein every day in order to check on the Cassandra army's preparations. Today as well, since the sun had set, Yuuki launched her air board and went out for reconnaissance.

"A part of their forces seemed to be ready to depart even now. They might possibly leave their fort by tomorrow morning... I think."

"What exactly did you mean by saying they seemed to be ready to depart even now?"

As expected, because Naga asked the question, Yuuki's face became sullen.

"What? Are you saying I'm unreliable?"

"I do believe you, but there might be misunderstandings as well. It would probably be more effective to discuss that together."

"I also want to ask that. What made you think so? Report from the beginning, Yuuki."

Once she was told by Harrigan, she couldn't oppose. Yuuki explained the reason behind her thinking that they '...seemed to be ready to depart even now.'

"A part of the enemy folded up their tents, whereas, another one moved in a group. Several of their troops were heading this way while walking along the paths. I think they might be in charge of scouting. No other troops followed them, and since 3 days ago, no other troops have arrived at their fort. Their usual practice at noon was also not done today."

At that point, Yuuki, who finished speaking put her hand on her hip and glared

while being puffed up with pride and said ‘How about that, do you have a problem?’.

“No, we don’t. That’s a crucial part. Don’t you have a splendid eye for observation, Yuuki?”

“I-It’s obviou—that’s not what I mean. Speaking of which, this much should be common knowledge. Don’t praise people while acting all high and mighty with that ‘I’m smarter than you’ expression.”

“That’s right. I wonder If I haven’t looked down at you a bit. I apologize.”

Because Naga slightly bowed down, Yuuki felt troubled at her own outburst and raised fist.

“W, well. If you understand, that’s fine.” saying that, she sat down.

Naga seemed to smile unintentionally but because he was facing downward, Yuuki probably didn’t notice it. She wouldn’t say any more than that. Naga removed his slightly visible smile and raised his face up while making a stern expression.

“It looks like the first wave of their troops are going to leave the fort tomorrow.”

As he said that and looked at Harrigan, she nodded in a grave fashion.

“Umu, there’s no doubt about that.”

“So, judging from what Yuuki confirmed, about the soldiers being in the middle of gathering, they will most likely reach us in about 11 days? Indeed, that’s insufficient time for making preparations. If we only have this much time, we should probably just consider bringing provisions for the current battle.”

Naga and Co. didn’t know it, but, tomorrow would mark the 10th day since the general, who was in charge of leading the army, informed the king of his plan during the banquet.

In other words, they would be departing, just as they planned. This couldn’t mean anything except that they were finished with gathering the provisions, weapons, water, and fodder. Naga smiled.

“Just as I assumed. Let’s proceed with a blitzkrieg.”

Naga, who lifted himself up from his folding stool, put the map made by Yuuki in the middle of the circle. The other witches stood and gathered around Naga.

Only Yuuki was looking at her own map as if backing out of the newly formed, small circle.

“What’s the matter, Yuuki? Don’t just stay there, come here.” “Ah, *hesitating*, I’ll be fine standing here, Ane-sama.” “Because standing there is bothersome, I’m telling you to come here and sit.” “Ah, Kay, make some space.” “Yes-su”

As soon as Kay shifted her body to make sitting space, Ais beckoned Yuuki with a smiling face.

“Yes, Yuuki, come sit down here.” “No, but....” “I feel troubled. Even though I want this meeting to proceed fast. Even though I want this to proceed fast!”

Ais, intentionally frowned her eyebrows and cracked her knuckles.

Yuuki jumped to the open space with a bounce and sat down with a plop.

“G, go ahead.” “Kukuku” – Harrigan laughed. “Please go on, Naga.”

As Naga nodded, he pointed to the wide map on the floor.

“It has been decided where we will repel the enemy’s attack. The problem is when we should expect them to come.”

Saying so, Naga looked at Harrigan’s face.

“Can you give an estimate?” “I believe so. If they set out in the morning from the fort, the first wave should reach the Schwein river in....”

Considering the advancing speed of the Cassandra Kingdom’s forces and their distance from the Schwein river, Harrigan roughly calculated the enemy’s time of arrival.

“Despite the mountains being short, they still have to cross them using paths don’t they? I wonder if they will possibly reach the river around evening. In the first place, I don’t know much about the soldiers’ full armaments nor the speed they are moving at, so I can only guess.”

Assuming they depart at 6 o’clock in the morning and arrive at 3 in the afternoon, it would be 7 hours of walking for them, including 2 hours of break

on the way (plus lunch).

Provided they advance with an average speed of around 1 liga (around 4.8km) per hour, the distance would be roughly 7 liga (around 33.6km) til the Schwein river.

Still, they had to cross the mountains' paths and walk with heavy equipment on their body. Perhaps their advancing speed would be a little bit slower.

Naga, who came from another world, had no knowledge regarding the enemy's armaments, walking ability or the level of the Cassandra Kingdom army's experience. Because of that, all he could do was to believe Harrigan's words.

Naga once again faced toward Yuuki.

"What's the ratio of their cavalry?" "Ah, er, I don't think there were that many. Even if we were to estimate from the whole army, it would be like 1/10 of their forces, at most, 1/5 of that.... I think?" "So it would be around 200-400 out of 2000? So it was like that? Speaking of which, I don't know much regarding this world, so I can't say for sure, but..."

Saying so he turned back to Harrigan.

"There should be no big errors if it's that ratio."

Harrigan regarded Yuuki's guess positively.

"You think so? If their number is close to as many as 400, it will be troublesome..... still, it doesn't look like they will be able to hinder the execution of our strategy. Speaking of which, when you talk about cavalry, do you mean they are solely made up of cavalry? Like those horse-riding troops in which the horse-riders would act together as a group? Or something else...."

"As for that, I haven't heard much, but there is a rumor that whenever there's a battle between equestrian tribes located in the northern plateau area, both sides would fight with nothing but cavalry. Still, the bordering countries here primarily mobilize foot soldiers and cavalry together."

"Is that so? Then, there doesn't seem to be any problem and we can proceed as planned. However, our ability to create and execute the second plan will

depend on whether or not there's a problem. By all means, the real fight will begin once they depart, which means we'll be relying on Yuuki."

After saying so, Naga looked at Yuuki. Nevertheless, she turned away. Then Lela opened her mouth

"Since Yuuki is playing a leading ro-le, you should formally request this from he-r."

Lela said with a nonchalant expression.

"That's right" – as Naga nodded, he kneeled down with his legs on the floor, and with a formal mood he faced Yuuki while he prostrated himself.

"I kindly request this of you, Yuki-sama." "Eh?!"

Yuuki bent backward with surprise.

"I-It feels gross, so stop!" "Hahha" – Naga raised his head while laughing and immediately assumed a stern face.

"There's no doubt that this tactic's outcome will greatly depend on you. That's why, I entrust this to you, Yuuki." "G.....Got it. Because our future is at stake, I'll do my best, even if I have to die." "That's the spirit. But if you die, it will be no good."

Without looking in Naga's direction, Yuuki stared at the ceiling while answering with a murmur.

"That was just a comparison. Of course I don't want to die, so even without your needless worry, it's fine. But, since I'm the center of this tactic, it should be natural for you to worry."

"Which one is it?" "T-that's why! There's no need for you to worry, but, I'm telling you to properly worry about me...." "You're making quite a difficult request there." "W-where do you see it being difficult?"

Kay and Mimone chuckled. On the other hand, Harrigan and Ais were watching both of them with a warm gaze.

Noticing the looks coming from her surroundings, Yuuki panicked.



“Wai....What are you looking at? Hey, if we don’t proceed with the meeting, it will be bad. There are still other topics to discuss, right?”

“Yeah, it’s just as Yuuki says. Tomorrow, it will be an early morning, so we have to finish this meeting, take a meal, and go sleep. Well then Naga, won’t you confirm for the last time, both sides’ instructions? Every member’s deployment too, let’s check it one more time.”

“Right-o” – As Naga answered, he bent himself forward.

“If the enemy’s first wave departs in the morning and reaches the river around the evening, the other waves, perhaps the entire army, might camp out near the river the next night. If so, the first battle will await us in the early morning on that day. The first location for battle will be here.”

Naga showed their side of the river, using his finger to tap.

“They will, without a doubt, make sure of their surroundings. As long as they don’t check that, their main forces will perhaps not advance through the river. The reason is because they seem to be unusually afraid of the witches’ magic.”

Saying so, once Naga put up a sarcastic smile, Harrigan too, smiled as if scoffing at the enemy.

“Fufun, that’s right.” “Once they see something incomprehensible, they will probably become much more cautious in their actions. To be more accurate, they will first send out a scouting unit to make sure of things.”

Lela raised her hand.

“What?” “Should we prepare a counterplan, in case we have to deal with the whole army deciding to cross the river?” “That’s true. In that situation, we will launch the second plan. It will be hard to find the right opportunity to do it but we can only leave that matter to chance. Because they shouldn’t be able cross the river with their whole army at the same time while in marching order, there should be some time for us to react. We’ll manage it somehow. Even if they only sustain a small amount of damage, it should be enough to make them prepare to flee. With that, once the first wave scatters, we are going to strike the enemy with our first plan.”

“Is this part clear?” – Naga asked as he looked around at the witches. Because

there were no questions or objections, Naga proceeds with the talk.

“Everyone’s deployment will proceed as planned. The first group will hide in the battlefield – that’s me, Harrigan, Lela, Kay, Cu, Selena. The six of us. The second group will be at the upper part for the river, under Ais’ command – Nonoeru, Eleonortha, Mimone, Jiiniasu, the five of you. Yuuki will be watching the battlefield from above... no, doing that all the time will consume your energy, so it’s safer to hide somewhere. The remaining witches will stay behind the battlefield. I’ll command the first group. In case I can’t, Harrigan will. If neither of us can, Lela will be in charge.”

Lela nodded without uttering a word. Despite saying ‘if neither of us’, it would mean both of them getting killed or sustaining heavy injuries, and therefore, an utter defeat for the witches.

There didn’t seem to be any meaning in deciding who would take up command next, but even if it was true, the witches decided to follow Naga’s emphasis on considering the possible outcomes, as well as preparing to take the right measures at the time of facing the battle.

“The commander of the second group will be Ais. In case Ais isn’t be able, Mimone. In case she isn’t, Nonoeru.”

Each of them replied showing their understanding.

“The commander of the rear guard will be Ikushina. If she can’t, it will be Linna and Linne. And after them, Neneru.”

This time, the four of them replied with understanding. It seems that as long Linne and Linna aren’t working together, their individual capabilities will be reduced by half, according to Harrigan.

“Still, it’s not like we won’t be able to use one of them if the other is not available.....”

It became such a matter. With that, Naga appointed both the twin sisters as the commanders.

“No matter how scrupulously we consider the tactics, or however detailed our analysis is, battle isn’t something that will go in accordance with the calculations done on paper. You will have to adapt to the requirements of the

actual battle. Everyone, I'll entrust you with that."

Energetic answers came from everybody.

"After that, it will depend on Yuuki's actions whether the cooperation of the first group and second will go smoothly. I'll entrust you with this, Yuuki." "Ah. Yeah, that's right, I'll do it. I'll try my best while not dying."

Saying that, she firmly clenched her right fist.

"Wow!" "Yuuki is becoming honest?" "As long a storm doesn't suddenly arrive, it should be fine, right?"

Kay, Mimone, and Eleonortha put their heads together as they whispered to each other.

"Rather, it will be much more beneficial for us if a storm comes. That's why, Yuuki, it's fine for you to be honest for a single evening, ok?" "Wha!? what are you talking about, Ais?!"

Yuuki snapped and pointed at Ais while shouting.

"Am I not a good daughter who's always honest?!" "Good grief... she came back to her usual self."

With that Kay looked up at the sky.

"Like that, you won't be able to expect a storm?"

As the laughing voices from the surroundings suddenly rose up, Yuuki glared at her companions, red faced. Besides Ais, the other witches looked away hurriedly.

"Kukuku" – Harrigan laughed as she jumped in. "Because it feels a little strange to see an honest Yuuki, it's fine for you to act as you usually do." "Ane-sama....."

Despite Yuuki making a piteous expression, Harrigan ignored her and, as if concluding this topic, urged Naga- "I'll let you continue."

"Yeah, well, let's continue. If it goes according to our calculations, there should be around 100-200 of them alone on this side of the river. Despite our assumptions, there may be more or less to deal with. It will be troublesome if

there are more, but whichever scenario it is, our way of dealing with them basically won't change.”

Naga placed three long, narrow wooden sticks on the map at a parallel.

“First, we will assault and annihilate the scouting troops. Once they notice they’re under attack, the other troops will cross the river to reinforce them. We will aim for that moment and lure them into the trap. Then, we will assault the troops that become isolated on this side, throwing all our forces at them. After dealing heavy damage, my group will deliver the finishing blow. In case there’s not enough of us, the third group will join in and charge.”

While thrusting with his instructing baton here and there on the map, he said so.

“Done. The crucial part is that you have to strike all of them, even if it’s difficult, thoroughly, without leaving any in order to show them how fearsome your magic is. Even without using your magic, as long they have the delusion of you being incredibly scary, they will start to have unnecessary thoughts, and it will result in them making errors. If we’re lucky, our plan might just be able to stop them.”

Were the witches contemplating his words? No one replied.

(Until now, they have been encountering only dozens of humans at a time. Could it be that it’s unreasonable to force the mentality of a commander, who tells them to fight against hundreds or thousands of soldiers, on them?) Thinking so, Naga omitted any more details than that in his explanation.

“I think you have already imprinted the plan in your mind after practicing it many times, but if any one of you have any questions, ask. Because tomorrow, before the evening, we have to begin our plan. Speaking of which, I need to have group 2 move, when it’s night, to their proper place...”

Saying so, he looked around at all the members’ faces. There was no one who had any particular questions.

Map of Battle Transition 0 - Pre-battle deployment -

2nd group at
the upstream
(5 people)

- Air
- Jiniasu
- Nonoel
- Eleonortha
- Mimone

Upstream

The Schweiz River

下流

Assumed place of
the battle

upper air

- Yuuki

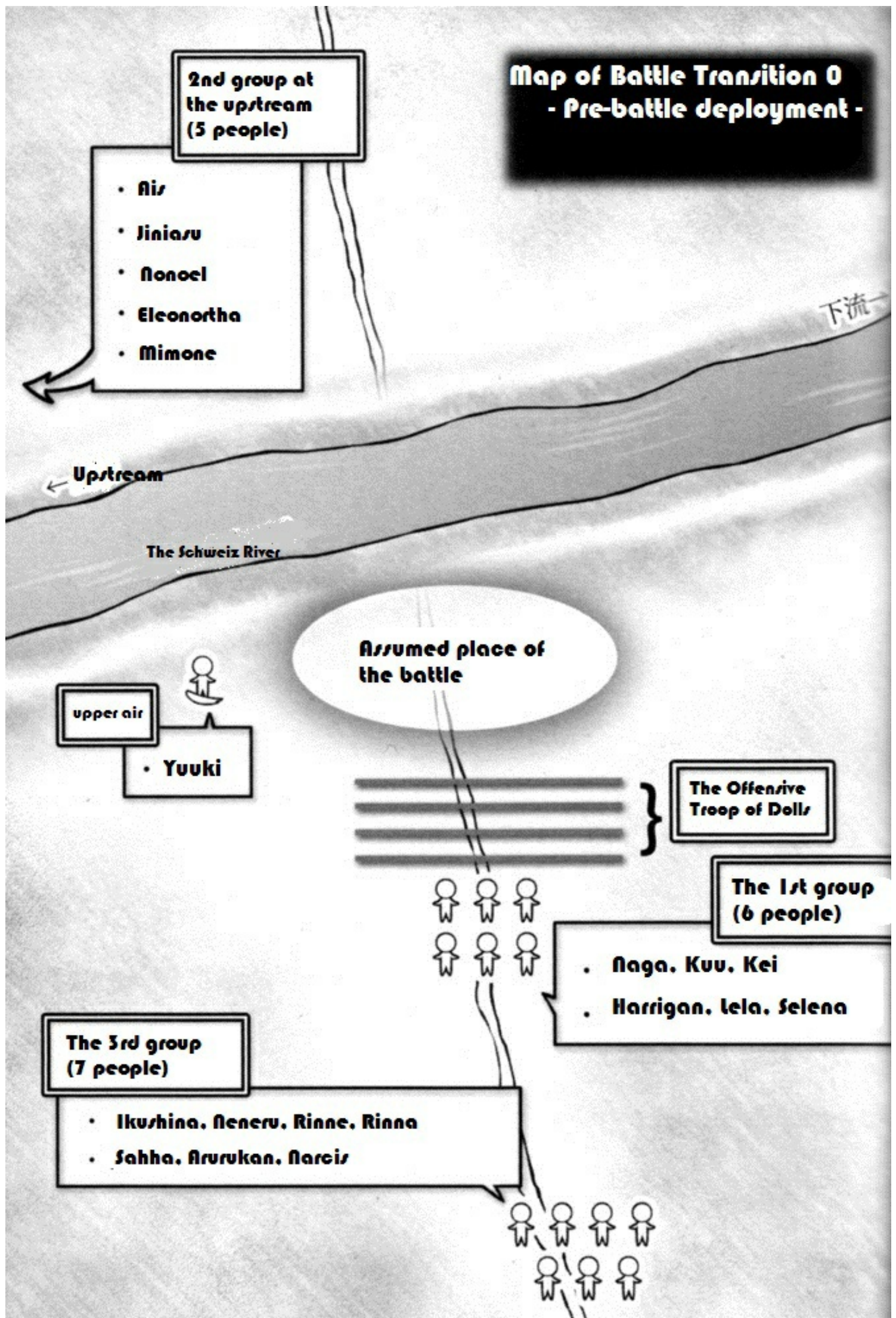
The Offensive
Troop of Dolls

The 1st group
(6 people)

- Naga, Kuu, Kei
- Harrigan, Iela, Selena

The 3rd group
(7 people)

- Ikushina, Neneru, Rinne, Rinna
- Sahha, Arurukan, Narcis



“Everyone has a copy of the map?” “Yes” (everyone) “Good, let’s begin our plan.”

As soon Naga stood up, the witches, too, stood up one after another.

“Ahh, Naga, wait.”

Harrigan halted him.

“What’s the matter?” “Ais, please bring that.” “T,that? Right away.”

Ais, who stood up, went out of the room quickly. Seeing her off with a suspicious expression, Naga turned toward Harrigan after Ais vanished.

“What is she bringing?” “It’s a fine item.”

She answered while laughing.

(So she isn’t going to tell me until I see it myself?)

“Wait a bit, she will come back soon.”

Soon after Harrigan had said, Ais returned while holding something in her hands.

“Here, Ane-sama.”

Saying so, she handed the thing over to Harrigan.

“Umu, good job.”

Once Harrigan received and placed the very thin item, which was wrapped in woven fabric, on the floor, she immediately presented it to Naga.

“This is?”

Having a suspicious expression, he faced towards her.

“This is a present from me to you. Look inside it.”

“O, Oh?”

Naga reached out his hands and unwrapped the gift.

“Hey, this is-!” “Since you arrived here, you have been wearing the same clothes all the time. So I wondered whether or not you’d like some new clothes. Because I’ve never sewn men’s clothing, I used yours as a reference, and after

that, thought of the right pattern.”

The moment Naga picked up the folded clothes with his hands, he spread it on the floor. What the witches prepared for him was a quite flashy colored tube hakama with voluminous sleeves.

“You guys, did you make it during the preparations for the battle?” “That’s right. Since we divided the labor between everyone, it wasn’t that troublesome. It would be nice if you can accept it without restraint.” “I’ll accept it with pleasure.”

Naga gently brushed the new attire with his hand in a loving manner.

“Well then, shall I go out to the battle tomorrow while wearing this?” “I think this a suitable clothing for a commander.”

As she said it, Naga smiled gladly.

“Good, then, shall we have a toast to close?”

Harrigan had Ais bring the barrel of alcohol, which was left in the corner of the room. Ais, who was lightly carrying it, put it on the floor with a thud, making the floor shake. From this, one could understand it was heavy. She cracked the lid of the barrel open using her bare fist.

“Well then, let’s have a toast and pray for victory.”

Soon after Harrigan stepped forward holding the wooden wine cup, Naga and other witches, too, gathered around the barrel while doing the same.

As everyone was waiting to scoop out some of the grape wine into their cups, Harrigan faced toward Naga.

“Naga, please lead the toast.” “Are you okay with me doing that?”

“I don’t mind. Speaking of which, you’re the commander for this battle. That’s why, it won’t begin without you doing it.”

“Is that so? Well....”

Lifting high the wine cup in his hand, he raised his voice.

“This battle isn’t as great as other battles may have been, but, it’s the one that holds the greatest importance for our future.”

Despite Naga referring to them as 'we' instead of 'you', one still could not understand how profound the meaning in his words were.

However, many witches noticed the meaning of his words. They received his words as the declaration that he would share their fate. It could be said, that in this moment, they truly became comrades and friends. "Let's win. If we win, shall we hold a celebration banquet one more time?" "Yes.!" (everyone) "The dark witches of the black forest, I pray for the victory of Harrigan Halliway Haindora and her members, toast!" "Toast!" (everyone)

That night, group 2, under the command of Ais, left the fort and moved toward their respective position – the dam at the Schwein river.

Even though both sides had yet to clash, from a certain point of view, one could say their battle had already begun. In the end, will Naga's plan lead to good fortune, or ill? Will the witches open the door leading towards their new future? The result will probably be decided tomorrow.

Chapter 2: Commence, the Opening of Hostilities

The 1st wave of the Cassandra Kingdom's black forest invasion army departed from Fort Ein.

It was comprised of the 2nd battalion, which had 500 soldiers. On the other hand, the 2nd wave consisted of the 1st battalion and the 3rd wave consisted of the 3rd battalion, both of which had 500 soldiers in them. They maintained well-organized ranks while standing by near the outskirts of Fort Ein. These were not the only troops available, there was also a reserve force within the regimental headquarters. The ratio between infantry and cavalry was about 5:1. In other words, in each battalion of 500, there were 420 infantry and 80 cavalry. Judging from the norms of troop formations in this world, it was a balanced number. Not to mention, if you paid closer attention to the infantry, there would be 120 archers for every 300 foot soldiers. Assuming it was a battle on a plain field, the first action taken would be to fire arrows at each other, and after that, charging at the enemy troops with cavalry and infantry. This type of strategy would be frequently applied, even so, it didn't seem like the cavalry would get a chance to act this time. The reason for that was because of the steep slope that made it impossible for them to charge in. In this sort of terrain, they would be easy targets because they couldn't utilize their full speed. If the cavalry wanted to take part, they'd have to dismount and lead their horses up while the infantry suppressed any attacks from the top of the cliff. First, it was necessary for the archers and foot soldiers to climb up the big cliff and gain control of the fort. With foot soldiers and archers bearing the responsibility of fighting the witches, the cavalry was assigned as the rearguard in case of emergencies.

The 1st wave, consisting of the 2nd battalion, left in the morning and was

assigned the task of moving through the gentler mountain passes, reaching the Schwein River by midday and setting up camp. For the sake of future battles, the army commander General Geobalk decided to set up this place as a base and a food storage warehouse. The General predicted that they would be able to seize the witches' fort within the day. Assuming that his prediction came true, the soldiers would be fine with only enough provisions to last for 2-3 days. However, once the fort was taken over, there would be a need for repairs and reinforcements. Not to mention, they will also have to guard the slope between the plain and the great cliff. Even the road from Fort Ein to the base of the slope needed maintenance.

Geobalk had to make the army of 2000 soldiers strictly follow his tactics within a short period of time. In regard to fortified cities, there were other methods they could utilize, such as raiding the conquered city's food stores to feed their army. However, there was not enough to be taken from the witches' small fort. The general assigned 300 soldiers to attend to the supplies for the 2000 officers and men.

On a side note.

It was then decided that Raibaha, who was harshly criticized for losing the majority of his forces, would fill the position of commanding officer for the supply unit.

Reassigned from a company captain of 100 soldiers to the commander of 300 supply corp, one would think that he was moving up in the hierarchy judging from the number of subordinates. However, becoming a commander of a rear support unit after being released from the position of a combat company captain, was in fact more of a demotion than a promotion.

"I guess, nothing good comes from being involved with the witches."

Raibaha grieved but even so, he wondered himself if it was really as bad as he had thought. He had directly experienced the dreadful nature of the witches' attacks. Perhaps he was actually quite lucky not to have to stand on the front lines and face them. Leaving that aside, Geobalk, who was a veteran general with a long history of military service, came up with the following plan:

After the 1st wave (2nd battalion) set up perimeter defences at Schwein

River, the 2nd wave (1st battalion) and 3rd wave (3rd battalion) will move in behind them and set up camp.

The next morning, the main force advanced towards the great cliff, leaving behind a small number to defend the base camp. Judging from their experiences up till now, which were the probing attacks to determine the combat capability of the witches, the General didn't even consider the possibility that the witches will attack them while they were on the march.

If there was going to be a battle, the General thought it would happen the moment they crested the cliff, but at the same time, he didn't really think there would be an attack. The biggest reason for why he thought so was because of the overwhelming difference in the numbers between the two sides. The witches that guarded the fort on top of the cliff would be, at most, a dozen, or so he imagined. The witches might possess abilities beyond that of humans in the form of 'magic', but there was no way they could match an army of nearly 2000.

No matter how strong the giant doll from the rumors was, as long it's a battle on a plain, there were countless methods to deal with it.

That doll could be defeated pretty easily if they could surround it with 100-200 cavalry. Because the potential of a wooden puppet is fully displayed in a narrow place where only a limited number of soldiers can fight it, Geobalk concluded that it won't be able to utilize its power against a large group in open grounds. And his evaluation was right.

In the last battle, the puppet that was lured downhill was attacked by battering rams pulled by cavalry, which proved very effective. After that, the allied soldiers sustained injuries due to the doll catching fire and exploding; nevertheless, Geobalk was questioning if the dolls that sustain heavy damages will explode. Again, his guess had hit the mark. What he also managed to verify was the fact that the witches wouldn't sortie with 2 or more puppets. Therefore, he predicted that they would only utilize a single puppet each time.

This assumption was also correct. If that's the case, the general reached the conclusion that the witches would not be a threat to his army as long they battled on the plains. Geobalk's analysis and hypothesis was flawless. Or rather,

he was completely correct. The only miscalculation of the General was that the witches had abandoned the way they fought all this time and adopted the tactics of Naga, who came from an alternate world. Since it was impossible for either him or his men to learn about Naga's presence beforehand, one could say that it was hard to blame him for his tactics failing in this case.

Shortly after the 1st wave left, the 2nd wave also departed from Fort Ein. Its soldiers' steps were steady and their formation tight. Well-disciplined troops meant they were easy to command. Following them, the general, his staff officers, and his guards prepared for departure.

Geobalk, who straddled on a fawn-colored steed, called out to an adjutant next to him.

"The 3rd wave will depart as well. Tell that to the 3rd battalion." "Yes."

Seeing the cavalry messenger breaking into a run, Geobalk addressed his staff officers, who were organizing the surroundings, with a loud voice.

"We will immediately crush the witches' fort on the cliff! Don't lose to the likes of witches!" "Yes Sir!" "Keep His Majesty our King and God our Father in your hearts for this battle!"

"Yes Sir!!" "Excellent, move out!"

Responding to Geobalk, voices of the staff officers reverberated through the area.

"Move out!" "General Geobalk will be setting off personally!" "Don't fall behind!"

The departure time for the 200 soldiers from regimental headquarters, led by the general, was around 5th watch. (10 in the morning Earth Time) The majority of these 200 were cavalry. Following the regimental headquarters, the 3rd battalion of 500 soldiers came after.

Like that, the whole invasion army of 2000 soldiers, 1700 soldiers if the supply unit is omitted, left the fort. If one was to mark their departure date using their calendar, it would be the 24th day of the 5th month of the 12th year of Cassandra III's reign.

The day's weather was clear. Some clouds appeared here and there in the sky, it was a day where they could feel a bit of humidity coming from the unobstructed sun's rays.

Once the regimental headquarters and the 3rd unit arrived at the encampment, the sun was already about to set.

The location they chose to camp on was an open, flat land, located a bit away from the Schwein River.

Since there were small tributaries nearby that were pouring into the river, the water supply wouldn't become a problem. It was more than large enough for the 2000 men to make camp. Geobalk's plan was to stay here overnight and leave the next morning. After that, they would advance directly towards the place before the great cliff and conduct a reconnaissance of the enemy's movements. By the time the general and the rest reached, the 1st and 2nd wave have already set up a simple base and set up tents.

Despite saying so, they had only managed to build a wooden fence using logs cut on their way from the mountain, and had yet to set up abatis and blockades yet. They didn't consider they'd be assaulted by the witches in the first place, thus, it wasn't really necessary to strengthen their encampment. The simple base was for the general, staff officers and officers to rest, as well as a place to store provisions that would be coming later.

After the 2nd and 3rd wave arrived, the soldiers put up their tents in preparation for their stay.

Ahead of their encampment, there was the Schwein River flowing in front of a gently sloping hill. The river's width ranged from 20 – 25 yards. Its flow was relatively fast and its depth could only reach one's waist. As long as its water doesn't flood during a rainfall, it should be possible for the foot soldiers to cross the river, not to mention the cavalry. The battalion commander of the 2nd battalion ordered the scouting unit to cross it for reconnaissance before sunset, however, nothing unusual was spotted.

Of course, there was no sign of the witches. That too was an obvious conclusion for the humans. So far, no one had ever heard of reports where the witches left the black forest. Even if the witches ambushed them there, they

wouldn't be able to overcome the scouts of 10 to 20 men. That was the experience from their battles so far, and the battalion commander didn't think it would be any different this time.

But to play it safe, he didn't force the scouts to venture too deep. If he pushed this hazardous duty onto them, it would only encourage them to desert.

Humans will fear whatever hides inside the darkness. Humans will fear violent beasts that eat people as their prey. And they will also fear the witches with abnormal abilities.

For a common soldier in this period, it was impossible to order him to abide by iron clad rules.

Fires were kindled here and there inside the encampment, and the smell of cooking rose up into the air. Despite the battle being scheduled for the following day, no tension could be sensed coming from the soldiers. Perhaps, being informed about the difference in both sides' military strength gave them their mental composure.

No matter how strong the witches were, the soldiers knew that they weren't invincible.

In fact, in numerous battles so far, the human armies had defeated many witches, or captured and executing them. The witches were fearsome existences, but not unbeatable. As long as one had enough numbers, there were no enemies that could not be defeated. That included witches. This was a belief commonly shared by the soldiers of this period. That was what the rank and file felt, and was even more so for the officers. The veteran general and his officers deemed that they could capture the fort even without having to fight. If, however, there was one, it would probably be at the bottom of the slope leading up to the black forest.

Therefore, that night, except for the people on the night shift, the officers and men entered into a sound sleep. Obviously, nothing occurred on that night as well.

The eastern sky continued to brighten. Finally, the sun peeked itself over the horizon and it became bright. On the other hand, the west side was still dyed in ultramarine, however, the east was burning in a deep red with the morning

glow. It was time for daybreak.

Looking above, the majority of the sky was covered with gray clouds, however, there were openings in various spots. The clouds were not very thick, and there was most likely no need to worry about rain on that day.

- gong gong gong gong*
- gong gong gong*

Inside the camp, a gong signaled that it was time to wake up. Did they think it was feeding time? The horses pulling carts drew closer after hearing the gong. One after another, soldiers began to emerge out from their simple tents. Most of them went to sleep without wearing their armor, as they didn't expect a surprise attack from the witches. Therefore, they weren't wearing them as they left their tents. Another reason for that was because the tents were cramped and low, which made them unable to wear any equipment inside them. Compared with them, the commanders, captains, leaders, the general, and his staff exited from nicer tents that were several times bigger.

Unlike the soldiers, they were already wearing armor.

"Hey, put your armor on quickly!" "Those who are on duty, prepare water and fodder for the horses!" "Don't neglect your morning breakfast!"

Voices from captains and leaders of platoons and companies flew about inside the camp.

At that time, the scouting unit that patrolled the bank of the river returned, Their unit consisted of the 6th platoon assigned to the 2nd company of the 2nd battalion. Since the 2nd battalion was the first to settle down near to the river, they were in charge of scouting.

"Reporting to the 2nd company captain! Reporting to the 2nd company captain!"

Feeling an unusual sensation, the commander of the 2nd company jumped up at the voice of a platoon's commander.

"Did something happened?" "Something strange is happening on the other side of the bank." "Something strange, you say?" "No, it's hard for me to

explain, but there're things lined up." "That's why I'm asking you what's happening." "I-I don't understand it myself."

The 2nd company's captain frowned. With the report sounding vague, the captain intended to scold the man but his subordinate seemed to be frightened by something approaching.

After all, he was a platoon leader and not a newly recruited person. On top of that, he had some experience as well. If you consider that, him falling into a panic is something abnormal.

The 2nd company executive officer called out the leaders of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th platoons, and ordered them to go out with the scouting unit to check the condition at the river. The executive officer himself went to report to the company captain.

After hearing the account, the captain then said that he himself would confirm the situation. At that point, the executive officer assembled 20 individuals, who were under the direct supervision of the captain and appointed them to advance towards the Schwein river. At the same time, he sent a messenger to the 2nd battalion commander. As soon as the executive officer ordered the 1st, 2nd, 7th, and 8th platoons to prepare for battle and be on standby, he straddled his horse and tagged along with his superior and his other officers to the Schwein river.

"W.....What's that?"

Progressing to the river bank with his horse, the captain strained his voice as if gasping and opened his mouth widely. Then he stared with wide eyes and looked at the opposite bank. His subordinates, who were standing in a row on top of their horses, couldn't provide an answer. On their right and left sides, the leaders of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th, platoons gazed at the other side of the bank as well, however, nobody raised a voice as they were unable to comprehend the strange view before their eyes.

In front of the right side of the riverbank, there was a wasteland expanding. Overall, in the south-eastern side, in other words, in the direction of the black forest, there was a gentle slope stretching out, with no undulations, making the view unobstructed. On top of a cliff on the other side, a thick, dense lump that

looked like a black hat was seen. It was the black forest Through the wasteland leading to the gentle slope, a path, which could hardly be called a path, stretched onward. Nearby, there were neatly lined objects arranged in rank that blocked the path, as if hindering the soldiers' way. Was the distance from the river shore to that point perhaps about a half of a League? Since it was far away, it wasn't clear what those objects were. However, it was certain some things were lined up horizontally there. If one was to look closely, there wasn't just a single row, but several of them. After all, due to the wide distance, they were unable to decisively tell whether it was 2, 3, or perhaps more rows of those things.

The one who came back to his senses fastest was the executive officer of the 2nd company, who was, at the same time, the actual person managing the company-related jobs.

"T-This is.....Captain, I think it's better to report this to our Battalion Commander....."

As he advised his superior with a trembling voice, the captain came back to himself. The 2nd company captain ordered a messenger to report to the 2nd battalion and immediately gather the leaders from the 3rd to 6th platoons. Around the captain, there were his staff officers and the leaders of 4 platoons lined up.

"Götze"

He called the name of the executive officer.

"Go and quickly summon the 1st, 2nd, and 7th platoons that are on standby at the camp together with their commanders. But leave the 8th platoon on standby." "Yes sir!"

The executive officer, Götze, rushed over to a messenger waiting upon for an order.

Whereas, the commander continued to pass down his orders.

"The 3rd, 4th, and 6th platoons will cross the river so as to confirm what those things are. However, don't do anything besides that, and don't go near anything recklessly. I'll entrust Halous with the leadership of the 3 platoons."

Being ordered, the 4th platoon leader saluted.

“Halous, after you cross the river with the 3rd, 4th, and 6th platoons, inspect the things that are lined up on the other side of the bank.”

Once Halous repeated the order, the company captain nodded down and responded.

“We will be awaiting an opportunity at the left side of the riverbank together with the 5th platoon and preparing in case something happens. As soon as the 1st, 2nd, and 7th platoons arrive, follow after them. Fine, now go!”

“Yes!”

Cursing inside their hearts for being given a troublesome task, the leaders of the 3rd, 4th, and 6th platoons dashed over to their subordinates.

After the crossing of the abovementioned platoons, the 2nd company captain selected 5 people from among his cavalry and sent them toward the other side of the bank. The horse-riders stopped at the right side of the shore on top of the bank, without progressing forward. It seemed that their main duty was to observe the other 3 platoons rather than scouting.

Perhaps it was done in order to probe which soldiers would escape and which ones would perform a meritorious deed. At the same time, their cavalry would bear the responsibility of immediately running their horses and checking the situation if something was to happen.

The 3 platoons, which were comprised of a total of 30 people, progressed carefully. In a period where there were no optical instruments like telescopes and binoculars, as long they didn't possess magic, scouting could only be done using your eyes. The platoons advanced until they could confirm what the objects were.

“S....Stumps?”

Someone muttered.

Indeed, the neatly lined up cylindrical stumps that ranged anywhere between 0.7 m and 0.9m and stretched out from both sides in front of them would probably be best described as “stumps”. However, the stumps had weird parts.

There were two short, thin, rod-like things attached to their lower end. And then, on the left and right sides of the stumps, there were two additional thin, pole-like objects attached to them, or so it seemed. These two poles were also thinner and longer than the previous ones.

“What the... doesn’t it look like a wooden puppet?”

Hearing somebody mutter the word “stumps”, another person responded. Being told so, the two rods resembled short legs, whereas, another two at the sides looked similarly to a pair of arms.

“They won’t move at all, I guess.” “As one would expect, ain’t they just puppets?” “But, why would somebody leave them in a place like this?”

At that moment, the soldiers looked at each other’s faces.

“Could it be.....” “W....Witches?” “Still, for what purpose?” “Do they plan to threaten us?” “You mean with these?” “Certainly, aren’t they of a size that could be easily beaten if kicked?” “I wonder if there’s some sort of curse inside of them.”

The soldiers tilted their heads similarly while expressing their doubts. However, in the end none of them was able to figure out the dolls’ purpose

“What should we do, Leader Halous”

The 3rd platoon leader asked the 4th platoon leader that was in charge of this scouting troop. Once Halous, who looked around his surroundings, turned around, he responded to the 3rd platoon leader with a heavy tone.

“It appears there are no places in which an enemy could hide, so there doesn’t seem to be any need to worry about an unexpected attack coming from the witches...? Assuming that’s true, shouldn’t we try to advance a bit further. Even if the witches left them here, these small sized dolls won’t become a threat.” “I guess so....” “Excellent, we will go a bit further.”

At Halous’ command, the 30 individuals moved forward.

Sticking out his face from the inside of one of the holes they’d made, Naga watched the enemy soldiers from a distance and immediately called out to Selena, who could observe the surroundings with her magic called Heaven’s

Eyes.

“What’s the situation?”

Heaven’s Eyes was her forte, it was a magic that could move her own point of view high into the middle of the sky. Like that, Selena could observe over distances and all around while she was on the ground as if she was in the sky like Yuuki.

Selena answered in a whisper.

“About 30 of them are heading in this direction while carefully approaching the dolls. Other than that, there are troops waiting at the side of the riverbank.”
“Is that so? So far, they’ve been progressing like we’d expected them to.”

Naga shifted his gaze around.

The other witches had stuck out their heads just like him with gazes filled with determination.

Not seeing any signs of discomposure on their faces, Naga felt relieved and, at the same time, amazed.

(Will this plan work out? Either way, the battle between the witches and the humans is about to start, I guess.)

Despite the all-or-nothing battle that was about to begin, Naga wore a daring smile. ‘We did what we had to do. The only thing left is to entrust our luck to the heavens’ – is what it said. Was it perhaps an expression of resolution to show his defiance?

(We’ve trained and prepared for victory. Saying so, I guess we will win as long we don’t lose. Of course it can’t be helped, if we lose. More importantly, provided we win, I don’t want to have any casualties on our side.)

Naga earnestly wished for that.

The distance that separated the scouting unit from the things lined up in the wasteland was around 270 meters. Once they advanced and drew close, they were able to confirm what, exactly, those objects were. The 3rd platoon was in the first row, 6th platoon in the 2nd row, and the 4th platoon in the 3rd row.

They advanced a short distance and then stopped.

They were about 40 yards (100-110 meters) away. The 3 leaders, who stood right behind the 3 platoons, strained their eyes as if trying to stretch themselves.

“As they said, they’re just stump dolls.....?” “Seems to be so.”

Numerous things, which appeared to be wooden stumps with legs and hands, were lined up in formation. Should one describe them as being lined up? Most likely they were placed, still, the bunch of wooden doll-like objects and the scouting unit were facing each other in formation on both sides of the path.

The scouting unit was formed into three rows, however, they confirmed that the doll-like objects made four rows. Did a single row consist of roughly 16-17 each? Also, the dolls were lined up at an interval of about 10-12 yards between all four rows.

“I don’t get it anymore.” “I guess they won’t move.” “That’s because they’re puppets after all.” “Still, they look similar to that giant puppet controlled by those witches.” “T-True, we can’t lower our guard.”

The 3 leaders looked at each other’s faces. Finally, two other people beside Halous asked him with questioning faces.

“Then, what should we do, Leader Halous?”

As they threw a question at him, Halous grumbled in a low tone and twisted his neck.

“I guess we should head back, as we were told to not do anything reckless.”

After that, the captain of 6th platoon suggested an idea.

“Because they’re things hard to explain to the Captain, how about we take 1 or 2 samples back? Wouldn’t it probably be faster to have him see?”

“That’s true, because we ourselves don’t have the slightest idea as to what they could be, not even from this close range.... we might get scolded by Captain. Since they don’t seem to be too big or heavy to be transported, it’s probably not a bad idea for us to carry back some and show them to the superiors. It’d better for our company captain and battalion commander to

have better insight as to what they are.” “Well then, we’re going.”

The 6th platoon’s leader raised his hand,

There was probably meaning in what his men, who were the first to suggest, said. However more importantly, by carrying back the real samples, they would make themselves look more hard working than the other platoons.....One couldn’t say whether this proposal with its sly calculation would work.

Was he perceptive enough to notice his intentions? The 3rd platoon’s leader stepped forward.

“In that case, we’ll come as well.”

Halous made a wry smile inside his heart while nodding.

“Then, the two of you go.”

The 2 platoon leaders went back to their group and shouted at their subordinates.

“Oi, we’re going to take those dolls with us.” “We’ll be carrying the dolls. Half of you come with me.”

Leading 5 subordinates in each of their group, the 2 leaders began to progress toward what seemed to be a crowd of lined up wooden puppets. Once they did so, the things.... looked like they moved slightly.

“Oi, oi, didn’t they just move?”

The leader of the 6th platoon pointed forward and screamed. The gazes of all the soldiers focused at once on the crowd of dolls.

“Ain’t they...holding something?”

Indeed, there was something lying in front of each doll’s slender, rod-like arms.

As this thing wasn’t visible until a while ago, there was no doubt it was covered with earth to conceal it.

“What, is this?”

The 3rd platoon leader shaded his eyes while peering in the front.

“A bow?”

Judging from their shape, one could guess it was a bow held by a puppet. And it wasn't just a single doll. All 60 individuals in the front group were holding the same type of bow. No, that's wrong. Aren't those dolls lying in a row behind them also holding a bow in their hands?

Not to mention, it wasn't clear what the dolls carried on their backs from far away as it was hidden, however, judging from this distance, it appeared to be something basket-shaped and attached to their backs. Their right hand, which was half-hidden behind their trunk, showed a slight movement.

It seemed that a pair of arms was splitting from its body with a joint in the middle of each arm. In comparison with their simple and utility focused legs and trunk, their arms appeared to be designed in detail.

‘What are they intending to do?’ – as if questioning so, the soldiers who stepped forward fixed their eyes towards that place.

“Don't!”

The 4th platoon leader screamed.

“Return here! Retreat quickly!”

At Halous who was shouting and swinging his right hand, the soldiers of the 3rd and 6th platoons turned around and looked with confused expressions.

“Return back hheerrreee! Those guys are planning to shoot us with their bows!”

By the time Halous screamed, the crowd of dolls prepared to fire.

Were the soldiers unable to grasp the sudden change in the situation? They turned around once again while wearing suspicious expressions.

Immediately after that.

- Fueen Fueen* – sounds of something cutting through the air were heard.

“Guwaa!”

Following that, a soldier fell. Everyone's eyes focused on the fallen soldier.

Between his eyebrows, there was a single arrow quivering.

“Whaaaa–?”

Having their faces distorted from surprise, again, the soldiers looked around.

- Fueenn Fueenn Fueenn Fueenn*

The surrounding air trembled from the overlapping sounds of arrows piercing through it.

“Yahh!” “Gahh!” “Uwaa!”

Raising their voices in screams, numerous soldiers dropped to the ground. On the other hand, the arrows continued to fall one after another. They were on top of a plain with no shelter. Nor had they any shields to block the arrows. They were also lightly equipped since their main duty was to scout. Not to mention, about 12 of them were concentrated in close quarters.

With all of that, the arrows pierced them without resistance. The soldiers continued to fall quickly. Those who didn’t die instantly had their limbs pierced and were unable to participate in combat. The remaining 12 people, who stood behind on standby, were in the same situation as they also couldn’t hide themselves or have any shields for protection. Finally, the remaining soldiers fell. Halous, who saw through the enemy’s intention, was a bit late in his reaction. As a result, he too fell on the spot, with his chest and thighs shot through by the arrows.

There were also those who responded quickly with their bows, nevertheless, most of them missed the dolls as their target was too small.

And despite some of them hitting, the puppets wouldn’t cease moving after being hit with 1 or 2 arrows. Obviously, this made the soldiers flee. However, showing their exposed backs was the same as committing suicide.

Right after they broke into a run, arrows rained down on them, piercing their backs, their necks, and thighs. In the end, no one managed to escape from the dolls’ range of fire.

It didn’t take much time for the 3rd, 4th and 6th platoons of the 2nd company to be completely annihilated.

The cavalry, who were at the right bank and watching over the scouting unit's movements, realized something had happened.

"What's that?" "Are they under attack?"

They saw the pitiful sight of their allies falling on the wasteland.

"There's no doubt about it. It's the enemy's attack!" "Where are the enemies?!" "Where are the witches hiding?!"

If it was an attack from the witches, the 5 cavalry couldn't rescue their allies even if they were to dash over to them. Rather, they would die in vain. The 5 of them immediately turned around with their horses.

Aiming for the left bank on which the main force of the 2nd battalion was located, the horse-riders began to cross the river while splashing through the water. The water was usually shallow, and today it was even emptier than usual. In an instant, the horses cut through the river. As they passed from the right to left side of the bank, nobody seemed to have noticed the meaning behind "there being less water than usual".

"It's an enemy attack! AN ENEMY ATTACK! the scouting unit is being attacked by the enemy on the other side of the river!"

Shouting noisily, the 5 horse-riders ran up the bank and aimed for the place where the 2nd company captain was.

"What's the matter?!" "What do you mean by an enemy attack?!" "What happened?!" "What's happening?!"

The staff officers around the company captain yelled in turns.

"I don't know the details, but it's certain that our allies have sustained injuries after being ambushed!"

The faces of the officers turned pale.

"We are going to cross the river. Everyone, follow me!"

The captain of the company who saddled his horse shouted.

"But, we still haven't grasped the situation...."

Trying to intercept the captain, he scolded his people.

“As if we can watch and see our comrades dying? Are you idiots?!”

Being told the truth, perhaps the captain couldn't handle making the decision to abandon their allies coming from other commanding officers and their superiors.

The 2nd company captain couldn't handle retreating after hearing of the troops' sacrifice.

(If I do so, won't I end up just like Raibaha?)

An image of Raibaha becoming the captain of the supply unit as a result of his tactical failure surfaced inside his head.

Right now, Raibaha was probably carrying the provisions to the encampment by the sweat of his brow. That was the result of him missing his chance for a meritorious deed on the battlefield.

(First, we are going to rush over to our allies. Even if we can't rescue them all it should be fine as long as my actions will be judged as trying to do so.)

The 2nd company captain was also one of those who had lived through this world of turmoil.

Still, rather than being heroic, the fact that he made a reckless decision despite not understanding the situation wasn't something that could be praised as a captain.

As soon the captain rode into the river, his subordinates could only follow him whether they liked it or not.

“Mobilize the 8th platoon! The rest will come with me!”

Once the captain ordered, others followed him. The staff officers and their subordinates rode into the river in succession. Seeing the cavalry crossing the river ahead, the 1st, 2nd, 5th and 7th platoons who were on standby ran down the terrace. Thanks to that, they were also able to grasp how deep the water was.

Not making a big fuss of that, the horse-riders quickly crossed the river.

Soon after the cavalry ascended the terrace of the river bank, an unbelievable view stretched out before them.

A row consisting of 60 puppets that was supposed to be far away approached near the river.

One of the horse-riders, who witnessed the ambush of the scouting troop, ran back to them and shouted.

"It's them! They're those dolls that were lined up in front!"

The soldiers of the 2nd company who crossed the river in order to reach the other side didn't notice the approaching puppets as they were descending from the terrace into the river.

"What's with those puppets?" "Seems like they were the ones responsible for attacking our allies."

The officers and men, who couldn't grasp the situation, were late in reacting.

By the time they realized it, arrows rained down on their heads. The cavalry didn't cover their whole body with heavy armor since they were riding on horses. Wearing it would mean sacrificing the horse's speed, and the control of the horse would become much more troublesome. Despite them having their chest, stomach, elbows, and knees covered, the other parts of their body were barely armored. And whenever arrows fall like that, the possibility of their exposed parts getting pierced is high. In most cases, a rider who gets hit will fall off their horse and be unable to control it.

Even if they don't get shot, it was still possible for their horses to be injured. As a result, the horses would go wild and buck their riders off. The 2nd company captain watched, dumbfounded, as his staff officers and his cavalry dropped from their horses one after another.

He still couldn't understand what was happening. More accurately, should one say that his ability to reason froze? It was natural that the spaced out captain would get hit. The moment he felt the pain coming from his pierced arm, the captain returned to his senses.

It appeared that he still wasn't out of luck as it was only his left arm that got pierced. There were also those among his subordinates who had sustained

heavy injuries from getting shot in their thighs and falling off their horses. As well as those rolling on the ground, they were hit by even more arrows, writhing in agony. The ones who had the worst luck would die instantly after getting hit in the face. Seeing the disastrous scene around him, the captain came to realize what a dangerous situation he was in. Abandoning his effort of trying to act like a brave captain, the man attempted to dash away without giving orders. However, there was a limit even to his luck.

Immediately after the captain galloped away and exposed his back, he was pierced by a single arrow through his nape. Instantly feeling pain running through his whole body, the man fell off his horse without being able to scream. By this time, almost all the officers had fallen.

There was nothing more devastating than a unit that loses its commanding officer.

The cavalry, together with the soldiers of 4 platoons, stared in astonishment at how their superiors fell off their horses noisily. Nevertheless, once the arrows flew in their direction, they lost their composure and became chaotic. The platoon leaders couldn't make their move as they would act on a command from their superiors. They would fight and retreat only if they were told so.

However, there was no longer anyone who could give them orders. The platoon leaders couldn't adapt to the sudden change and the men could only follow them around blindly as the unit took heavy damage. 10 people, who quickly escaped in fear, somehow managed to cross the river and reach its left bank. However, the remaining would die in action or incur heavy injuries and fall on the ground at the other side of the bank.

During that time, among the 90 people from all the platoons and the personnel from the company deputy, only 12 people were able to escape and reach the left bank.

Even if one was to add the 8th platoon stationed at the left bank, the remaining number of the 2nd company would be 22 soldiers. It was a disastrous result. The company lost 7 out of 8 from its whole number.

“Commander, just what on earth is this?!”

A single member of the 2nd battalion headquarters who advanced toward the

edge of the left bank looked at the battalion commander's pale face next to him. The commander, Sneijder, spat out.

"Damn. It's the witches, it's an ambush by the witches."

Having Sneijder draw that conclusion, his subordinates trembled in fear. Until now, nobody had gone through an experience of being ambushed like that by the witches.

The fact that their magic was powerful was well known, but until now they hadn't been that aggressive in their attacks. This was common knowledge among the officers and the men who stood at the front line, still, the surprise attack they just witnessed now was completely out of their expectations.

Just like the Cassandra Kingdom had gotten serious about invading the black forest, it seemed the witches gave the impression of trying to stop Cassandra's plans with their full power.

They were fighting against serious witches. Just imagining it was terrifying for the human soldiers.

"W-What should we do....?"

Another person from the battalion headquarters looked hard at Sneijder.

"Saying this and that. If they're going to hinder our march, we'll just crush them."

Sneijder who replied so could only say this. There was no way for him to show a weak attitude as a battalion commander. He had already lost nearly 80 people out of 500 before charging the fort of the witches. It wouldn't be wrong to say it was a big mistake. Sneijder had to recover from this error. He had to clear his dishonor. Otherwise, there would be no future prospects for him.

"We will send a messenger to General Geobalk!" "Y-Yes."

A messenger stepped forward.

"Tell him that our vanguard was ambushed at the other side of the bank by wooden dolls that seem to belong to the witches. So as to secure the crossing of the river, the 2nd battalion will forcefully eliminate the enemy dolls. That's it."

“I repeat: Our vanguard was ambushed at the other side of the bank by wooden dolls that seem to belong to the witches. So as to secure the crossing of the river, the 2nd battalion will forcefully eliminate the enemy dolls. The above message is to be conveyed from the 2nd battalion commander Sneijder to General Geobalk.”

Making sure of the order that was repeated, Sneijder said with an impatient voice.

“Fine, now go! hurry!”

The messenger straddled a nearby horse and galloped toward the headquarters of the General.

Normally, they would have to wait for an order coming from the general commanding the invasion, Geobalk, but Sneijder, who was fired up about clearing his name decided, on his own, to cross the river. Depending on the report, the general might move them to the rear and appoint another battalion for the extermination. If that happened, Sneijder would lose the chance to redeem himself. This was something he feared.

“Advance with the 1st and 3rd company! The battalion headquarters and the 4th company will follow after that. Once you reach the left riverbank, stop there for a while and check the status of the enemy’s dolls.”

When a command is passed down by one’s own battalion commander, staff officers can do nothing but follow. They began to move hurriedly toward the river.

Selena, who was facing upwards, called out.

“Naga-san, a battalion sized force began moving on the other side of the bank!”

Selena wore clothes matching the color of the reddish brown ground.

Naga, who was dressed similarly while lying on his belly suddenly rose unintentionally at her report. However, he lowered his body in a hurry once more.

(That was dangerous. I can’t afford to let myself get exposed now.)

Naga and Harrigan, who had left the holes, progressed toward the river.

In order to convey her commands to the dolls, it was necessary for Harrigan to move forward. The bigger the gaps between her and the puppets, the worse the conditions would be.

Saying so, Naga and the rest also tagged along with Harrigan as her guard. If their presence was to be exposed, they would probably be showered with the enemy's arrows. And even though the possibility was low, there was a chance that the cavalry would rush towards them. If that happened, the execution of Naga's plan would become more complicated.

Far from that, he could feel a sense of peril permeating his body at once.

(Calm down me, Calm down me. It should be fine as long as I leave the scouting to Selena)

Telling that to himself, Naga looked at the puppets forming a line in front and turned his eyes toward the terrace of the riverbank, It was hard for him to check from that position, but Yuuki should be hiding somewhere with her board. The one who could fly over the actual scene and report to Ais, who was in charge of launching the trap, was Yuuki. Still, Naga didn't want her to be spotted by the enemy while she'd be flying over the river. If that happened, the enemy would become cautious of their trap, making their surprise attack half as effective.

If she got shot down, the plan would be a failure.

(I'm relying on you, Yuuki. Please do it skillfully.)

As if praying, Naga directed his silent words of encouragement to Yuuki, who wasn't visible.

General Geobalk was the first one to learn about his troops being involved in a battle with the witches from the messenger sent by the 2nd battalion commander.

In an era where there were no telephone or wireless communication, one could only dispatch foot soldiers or cavalry as messengers. Still, one problem with such communication was the inability to send an immediate response to a situation.

There were many instances in which correspondence would be delayed.

Having an audience with the messenger, who had interrupted his preparations for departure, the general jumped up at the contents of the report.

“Oi, stop Sneijder immediately!”

Being shouted at by the general, a messenger was quickly called to the headquarters of the invasion army.

“Tell him to wait until we arrive at the spot, tell him not to do anything reckless!”

At his words, his adjutant instructed the messenger.

“Fine, now go!”

After seeing off the two messengers, the adjutant returned to the general’s side.

“What are your orders?” “There’s no time for pondering about that. We will immediately depart for the left riverbank of the Schwein. Pass that information to the 1st and 3rd battalions.” “Y-Yes sir!”

Watching the adjutant and staff officers gathering messengers and calling out the 1st and 3rd battalion commanders, Geobalk felt an inexpressible anxiety building in his chest.

Being assaulted by the witches at this stage was completely out of his expectations. The general was convinced that even if a battle was to take place, it would happen no sooner than at the time they would climb up the great cliff. Looking back at the past battles with the witches, it was only natural to think that way. In order to understand their fighting style, they had initiated numerous small battles and investigated and confirmed how the witches would cope with them.

Up to now, the witches hadn’t attacked outside of the forest and they would only devote themselves to repelling their attacks. Geobalk’s based his strategy for the expedition on this premise. If one was to look at all their battles with the witches until now, this would be the most obvious conclusion. Not to mention

that historical records also supported this.

Things like the witches descending to the plains and fighting the human army tactically was a story that was 100 years too early for them to believe. At the very least, this was something unheard and unseen to him since his enrollment into military service. The witches should be carrying out a policy of nonaggressive defence. Seeing how this major premise had crumbled, Geobalk felt a disturbance inside his heart.

(Still, no matter how I look at it, this fighting style isn't like them. Did some kind of change take place among their numbers? Or perhaps, they finally decided to become serious, and bare their fangs at us? Don't tell me that the scattered clans inside the forest decided to band together? If that's true, we might encounter more trouble than what I anticipated.)

As the supreme commander, Geobalk had to deal with a new situation. A situation in which the witches immediately turned aggressive.

Taking along his staff officers while riding quickly on his horse, Geobalk tried to add amendments to his already drawn strategy, but he couldn't reach a final conclusion.

As long as he couldn't confirm what kind of attack the witches were trying to carry out, he couldn't respond accurately.

(Despite this, that bastard Sneijder)

Even if the aggression from the witches was out of his expectations, the veteran general felt the urge to punish the 2nd battalion commander for again exposing his men to danger after having already lost 80 of his subordinates.

(That good-for-nothing bastard, I need to teach him a lesson once this battle ends)

Upon learning about the witches' fighting style betraying their expectations, taking careful measures was more than necessary. At any rate, the witches possessed a powerful weapon called magic. Til now, they had been able to understand to a certain degree the enemy's war potential through their small fights, nevertheless, it was not possible to grasp everything about them. Naturally, they had to consider that the witches also possessed magic they had

never witnessed before. Therefore, they should avoid any rash actions.

(Still, the fact that only the 2nd battalion crossed the river proves that that guy has no clue of how to judge a situation.)

Geobalk thought about demoting Sneijder on the spot once he caught up with his battalion, but in the end, that annoyance of his wouldn't materialize.

That's because the possibility of demoting Sneijder was no longer an option.

By the time Geobalk was rushing toward Schwein river with the 3rd company, the 2nd company had already commenced their crossing. The first one to enter the river was the 1st company. Just before doing so, nobody among Cassandra's soldiers noticed there was a little shadow, that seemed like a bird's, flying overhead.

The shadow, which danced in the sky, moved with terrific speed, as if gliding toward the upper stream while keeping its distance. The 1st company of the 2nd battalion crossed the river safely and began forming up. They began their advance at the opposite, right side of the riverbank. Coming next after the 1st company, the 3rd company began their crossing.

"Naga-san, as one would expect, there's another company following the first one."

At Selena's report, who controlled her Heaven's Eyes and watched over the enemy's movements, Naga faced upstream of the Schwein River without thinking.

"I wonder if it's about time."

Around him, there were Selena, Harrigan, Cu, Kay, and Lela.

The 3rd group of witches, who were waiting at the other side, would follow once Naga and his group advanced. That side was confirmed by Selena, so there was no doubt about it.

"Naga, we've finished lining up the dolls."

Harrigan's voice was heard.

"Is that so? The only thing left after that is to wait for the trap to spring, still..."

"Didn't Yuuki fly over a while ago? In that case, there should be no problem."

"I wish I could think so."

Naga waited impatiently for the right moment.

Lela noticed Naga's body slightly trembling.

(Heh? So even someone like him can be flustered, I guess.)

She was a bit surprised, but in fact, she was feeling the same.

No, not just Lela. Harrigan, Kay and Cu also glanced back and forth between the front and Selena while waiting eagerly.

But, Selena continued looking at the sky calmly

"Not yet?"

Naga got impatient and called out.

"Naga-san!" "Now?!" "No, not yet." "Still not yet?" "More importantly, the 2nd group of the enemy looks like they'll soon finish crossing. With that, there's going to be 200 units on this side of the bank."

"Che" – Naga clicked his tongue without realizing.

"That's bad. Even though we are supposed to target the 2nd group at the time as their crossing. At this rate, all the 200 units will cross the river." "A 3rd group! is coming after them to the riverbank!"

"Damn, what are they doing. Yuuki should have already passed the message to Ais."

If the 3rd group of soldiers passes through the river, the enemy number will be larger than the dolls, making Naga's attempt of inflicting heavy damage become more difficult.

Far from that, there's a high chance for the crowd of puppets to be overwhelmed. If that happened, they would have to turn tail and run back to the great cliff. Still, would they manage to escape safely while repelling the enemy's pursuit? There was no way to be sure about that.

(What's the matter, Yuuki?! Ais, did something happen?!)

Grinding his teeth, Naga turned his neck to look upstream.

Chapter 3: The Second Step

Part 1



CUI'S MAGIC

SHE CAN FREELY
CONTROL THE
BELTS WRAPPED
AROUND HER
BODY, SUCH AS
STRETCHING IT
OUT TO BIND EN-
EMIES OR USING
IT TO TRANSPORT
ITEMS, VERY VER-
SATILE IN USAGE.

BUT AS THE
BELTS ARE ALSO
HER CLOTHES,
THE MORE SHE
USES THEM, THE
MORE SKIN SHE
WILL SHOW.

Let us go back in time a little to explain the actions of Naga and the witches.

That night, when the Cassandra Army made camp near the Schwein River.

A thin layer of cloud covered the night sky, the moonlight shone through the gaps in the clouds, helping visibility greatly.

It was already the wee hours of the next day. Near the Schwein River, six figures could be seen to the southeast.

These darkened silhouettes were followed by a small army of short wooden puppets that barely reached waist height. Naturally, Harrigan was the one controlling the puppets. The puppets were arranged in four rows as they marched forward.

Just ordering the puppets to advance didn't require any complex commands from Harrigan. However, the burden of supplying mana for such a large group of puppets was quite taxing for Harrigan.

Naga walked beside Harrigan. He was wearing the Hakama the witches had given him that night, and some light armor covering it.

The armour was taken from the soldiers who had died in the previous battle. It was about Naga's size, so he wore it after making some minute adjustments.

With them were four other witches, Lela, Kay, Cu and Selena. Including Naga, everyone brought along a shield as a precaution. The shields were for defence if the enemy came within bow range.

Naga and the others moved through the barren lands by cover of night so they could transport and arrange the 280 wooden puppets on the river's right bank.

The enemies hadn't sent out any scouts tonight, so there wasn't any need for extra caution.

Even if the enemy sent out reconnaissance troops, the witches would be able to know beforehand and take countermeasures. At a time like this, Selena's magic, [Heaven's Eyes], was very effective. However, there were other problems.

According to Naga's prediction, that would be the very first battlefield. If the

enemy scouts crossed the Schwein River in the morning, then they would attack with the wooden puppets.

Naga would carry out a preemptive strike on the scouts with an ambush. If the enemy moved in larger numbers than expected, some would get away, and they would need to be prepared for the enemy's counterattack.

If possible, it would be better to observe the battle from a safe distance away. But Harrigan needed to control the puppets with magic, so she had to be within visible range.

And there was a massive amount of puppets this time. In order to supply mana to all the puppets, she needed to be closer than the time when she controlled just one giant puppet.

Due to these constraints, they had to hide themselves extremely close to the battlefield. If the ambush failed and the enemy broke through the puppets, they would immediately be within bow range of the enemy. That's why they'd brought shields to block arrows.

Naga, who was stuck in a place where arrows might fall, wasn't as nervous as expected. It was the same for Harrigan too.

"This is how a war should be."

Harrigan didn't seem too concerned after Naga said this, which surprised Naga.

The other witches were more or less tense, but no one shivered with fear. Naga was once again impressed by their courage and determination. It was the same for him too.

"I don't like such an all out bet." He said expressionlessly.

Harrigan had a surprised expression when Naga said this after they'd gotten this far.

"This doesn't sound like the words of the bold, proud, and fearless Dragon King."

Harrigan commented without any disdain or sarcasm, which made Naga reply with a troubled face: "Personally, I prefer quantity over quality. If possible, I will

gather a force that far outnumbers the enemy, and devastate them in one go. That is more my style.”

“For us, that is nothing but a daydream.” “That’s true.” Naga replied calmly.

“I can’t hope for more numbers from all of you. Willing or not, this type of ambush is the only way left. Don’t misunderstand and think I like this, alright?”

“I am a bit surprised.” “How so?” “You, well, I thought you were a man who would prefer a tougher challenge.” “Hey, don’t judge me so hastily.” “Hmm, I see.”

Harrigan narrowed her eyes.

“However, you being not as lecherous as you look... is that possible?”

Naga clicked his tongue and replied:

“Don’t turn it into a question. I am not lecherous at all.”

When they heard what Naga and Harrigan said, Lela, Kay, Cu and Selena retorted immediately in their hearts.

(That’s, a lie.) (Lie.) (Liar?) (He is... lying.)

“W-What, why are you all looking at me with gazes filled with doubt!?”

Lela continued staring at Naga coldly and answered:

“These are not gazes filled with doubt, but eyes full of absolute certain-ty.”

“Ahhh, is that so? Since you put it that way, I’m fine with being called lecherous.”

Naga brought his hands to his chest, opening and closing his palms in a groping motion.

“Since you all already labelled me as such, I will grope to my heart’s content.”

“You already did that before being labelled, right? I heard you groped Onee-sama’s breasts immediately after coming to this world, ri-ght?”

Naga turned stiff immediately.

Harrigan→Ais→Lela, that seemed to be how the rumours circulated. It was difficult to know who was responsible at a time like this. Ais heard it from

Harrigan, Lela heard it from Ais. However, the one who groped Harrigan's breasts was him.

(No, I didn't do anything wrong. Not at all. If I have to say it, it was Harrigan's fault for bathing nude in a place like that.) But Harrigan didn't think so. She frowned and glared at Naga.

"Right, I remember, such a thing did happen."

Harrigan's hair rose above her head, and took the form of a giant mallet.

"Should I return the favour for groping my breasts back then?"

Naga twisted his body away, putting his hands between him and Harrigan and waved them around.

"No, wait, wait." "Why should I wait?" "You see, back then, I came to a different world out of the blue and was confused okay? A pair of voluptuous, beautiful breasts suddenly appeared before my eyes and tempted me. Any man would want to grope them, right?" "You are spouting nonsense again."

Harrigan was still staring at Naga, but the anger had vanished from her eyes. At this moment, Cu said an explosive sentence.

"Strange? Naga, so you won't feel anything unless the breasts are huge?" "Ah? No, I am not that..." "For example, small breasts like Lela's won't do?" "Saying my breasts are small is rude, C-u."

Lela glared at Cu, and Naga shifts his gaze onto Lela.

"Ah... It's fine, don't worry. The value of a woman is not decided by her breast size." "That's an insult, ri-ght?" "Hahaha, that's great Lela, small breasts are fine too." "Like I said, stop saying my breasts are small. Your breasts are small too right, Cu?" "Ahahaha, what strict standards. But you are right, the only one who could win in terms of breasts is Harrigan-Nee." "Kay, how rude."

Cu puffed her cheeks.

"Erm, I think it is only natural for kids to have small breasts."

Selena interrupted stiffly.

(These girls, don't they feel any fear before a battle? What astonishing

nerves... No, is the opposite true? Are they chatting in order to relieve the fear and tension?) Naga felt this was very possible. The witches might possess great battle prowess, but they were still young girls. They were probably lacking in combat experience. On top of that, there were two thousand enemies this time. They had every reason to be nervous. It was impossible for them to be unafraid.

That was why they were chatting to ease their tension and fear.

(How thoughtful.)

The actions of the witches before him impressed Naga. On the other hand, the experienced Harrigan was acting normal.

“We are going to reach the battlefield soon, don’t make any unnecessary noise.”

She reminded them.

“Ah, sorry~~”

Cu apologized with her usual attitude, but it was obvious that she was only going through the motions verbally.

“How is it, Selena? Any sign of the enemy?” “A moment please, Onee-san.”

Selena turned her face towards the night sky, stopped in her tracks, and opened her eyes wide.

Her pupils turned red and glowed for a moment.

(I see, so this is ‘Heaven’s Eyes’.)

This was the first time Naga saw Selena use her Heaven’s Eyes.

(She is not like the other witches who chant a spell before activating their magic.) Selena’s pupils turned back to their original colour. After reverting to her original expression—

“No signs of the enemy in the vicinity.”

She answered. When she heard the report, Harrigan looked towards Naga.

“In that case, should we start arranging the wooden puppets?”

Naga scanned the surroundings quickly and nodded.

“Yes. Let’s begin after getting closer to the river.”

Part 2

Harrigan manipulated the wooden puppets, and arranged them into four rows on either side of the road. Naga and the others picked up the wooden flat-tipped hoes they'd brought along and started digging. After Naga dug a shallow trench, just big enough for one person to lie inside, he set his flat-tipped hoe aside.

"Will this do?"

Aside from the armour he looted from a dead enemy, Naga was also wearing the clothes the witches gave him. That's why he didn't really want to go into the trench, but war wasn't that pleasant. No matter how unwilling, one had to strive on. That's what Harrigan said, so he had to pretend he didn't mind the dirt and lie down in it.

"Anyway, just lie down, it will be good enough if you are just below ground level."

Naga then took out a blanket from his bags. It was reddish brown in colour, which blended in with the surrounding ground. He burrowed under the cloth.

"How is i-t?"

Lela asked. She was digging just like Naga, but she stopped and looked at him.

"... No problem. After covering the top with earth, it's hard to see you from afar." "Is that so? Then mine should be good eno-ugh."

Naga removed the cloth and stood up, then reached for the hoe.

"I need to dig one for Harrigan too."

After saying that, Naga picked up the hoe and started digging.

"If it's for her, it would be problematic if the trench isn't deeper than mine."

"Let me think why... it's because Onee-sama has big breasts and she can't hide

properly if the trench is too shallow, ri-ght?” “You don’t need to explain.”

Lela looked down at her breasts. Today, once again, she was wearing clothes which exposed much of her skin, and the talismans she used as a skirt hung down from her waist. This was a dangerous attire for battle, but armour would affect the witches’ magic if they wore it, so they had no other choice. The other witches also wore revealing clothing. No matter how Naga looked at it, such attire didn’t make sense.

Well then, what does your common sense tell you, Naga, you who has lost your memory? If someone asked him that, he wouldn’t be able to answer either.

(At least my clothing is closer to my common sense... right?)

As if she had seen through what Naga was thinking, Lela turned her face away with an unhappy face.

“It’s true that Onee-sama’s trench has to be deeper than mine in order for her to hi-de.” “Isn’t that right? She can’t hide if I don’t dig deeper, huh?”

Naga spread his arms with a smile.

- Donk!*

“That hurts!!”

Naga squatted down and cried out after being hit on the back of the head by Harrigan’s hair.

“You think I’m a titty monster!!?”

Naga nursed the back of his head as he looked up, and waved his palm in front of his face.

“Ah, no, I think they’re wonderful breasts.” “But isn’t the size too big?” “They won’t get any bigger even if I talk about how titillating they are, y’know.”

In response to Naga’s joke, Harrigan made an unpleasant face. The other four witches looked as if they had eaten something rotten and averted their face awkwardly, then returned to their digging quietly.

“Ara? You can’t take a joke?” “I know you are a smart man, but you don’t

have any talents in telling jokes.” “Ughh, what a harsh critique.” “Not at all. I did acknowledge that you are smart.” “But... Never mind, thanks for the compliment.”

(How should I put this, I don't think my wits are worth mentioning. It's just that the people and witches of this world are too righteous. Well, I will accept this evaluation since I received it.)

Naga just rolled with it.

(Not many people acknowledge me anyway. In that world, the only one who did was my dad... Ah? Who was my dad?)

Naga thought to himself. In the end, no clear images came to mind.

“What is it? Are you worried about something?”

Harrigan asked when she saw Naga acting that way.

“Ahh... No, it's nothing. I just thought of something, and was trying to remember.”

“Fufu. So, what did you remember?”

Naga shook his head weakly.

“I see. It's fine, don't be too anxious about it.” “Yup. I can't remember it anyway, so I just have to wait patiently.”

Naga replied and continued digging, but Harrigan stopped him.

“Hey, this should be enough right?” “Hmm?”

After checking the depth of the hole under his feet, He lifted his head and looked at Harrigan's breasts.

“L-Like I said! Don't look at my chest with such eyes!”

After receiving Harrigan's fierce glare, Naga shrugged.

“True, this should be good enough.”

Naga stepped out of the shallow pit, and Selena interrupted,

“Naga, mine's done too.”

Selena's hole was right next to Naga's She had to observe the movement of

the enemy and relay them to Naga, so their holes need to be within earshot. And since they were hiding, they couldn't be too loud. That's why Selena dug her hole right beside Naga.

"Alright, give it a try."

After Naga said that, Selena stepped into the hole and laid face up. Naga and the others will be lying prone, but Selena had to lie face up in order to use Heaven's Eyes.

After covering her body with a cloth like a blanket, only the top half of Selena's face could be seen, with her eyes wide open, looking at the night sky. Her pupils turned crimson again.

"... It's good. I can see clearly." "Is that so? Then it's fine. Any movement from the enemy?" "I will adjust my view."

Selena answered and the glow in her eyes became brighter.

"I can see the other side of the river, the Cassandra Kingdom has set up camp there. There are about five or six hundred people. There are groups heading towards the camp. The numbers... It's hard to tell, there should be more than a thousand. However, there is no sign of the enemy on this side of the river."

"Oh? Thank you for your hard work."

In response to Naga's voice, Selena's pupils reverted to their original colour.

"No problem."

Selena pulled herself up and got out of the hole.

"I'm done here too, Naga." "Mine to-o." "Job's done."

Kay, Lela and Cu answered after digging their holes.

"Harrigan, how much time til dawn?" "Let's see, probably about a watch later."

One watch was about two hours.

"There's nothing that needs to be done until dawn. Everyone, go into your holes and rest. You mustn't sleep, but lying down with your eyes closed will help you recover your fatigue."

Harrigan nodded her head in agreement.

“But Selena needs to keep her eyes open.” “Yes, I will work hard.” “I’m counting on you. If worse comes to worst and we need to run away, I will carry you to the horses if you’re too tired to move.”

In order to stop the horses from making noise, a bit was stuffed into their mouths, and tied to a wooden stake on a hill nearby.

“Erm... Sorry, I will be counting on you when the time comes.” “Hey Selena, your entire body would be touched all over if he carries you okay? Are you fine with that?” “I won’t do that! Think before you speak, Cu!” “Hahaha.”

Cu laughed innocently as usual, even after Naga glared at her.

“Then, piggyback me too.” “I won’t be able to walk if I piggyback you too.” “Huh~~ I’m not that heavy okay?” “Everyone is light, but two of you will be heavy together, isn’t that so?” “How boring. The title of Dragon King will cry if you complain about the little things, y’know?”

Naga couldn’t help smiling wryly.

(This girl gets along with others easily. A rare case among the witches.)

Cu couldn’t hide her nervousness when she first met Naga. But after chatting with him a few times, she could talk with him easily, like old friends who had known each other for years.

(Everyone has their own unique character, how interesting. Painting these girls to be the incarnation of evil that needs to be purged, the people from the Church are twisting the truth.)

But Naga learned about all of this from Harrigan. Humans should have their own opinions too. But the Church’s opinion that Harrigan and her witches are the sworn enemies of humanity was hard for Naga to accept. Or rather, Naga found it hard to accept religion influencing politics. Humans affiliated with religion just need to worry about religious matters.

But why did he think this way? Naga couldn’t understand. Sympathy for the witches? Resistance against the forces of the Church? What Naga was thinking right now would deeply affect his beliefs and ideas in the future. But right now,

he hadn't noticed.

"If you can't walk, why not let Cu carry you all to ru-n?"

Lela suggested to Cu suddenly.

"Cu?"

Kay turned towards Cu, and the front end of her belts squirmed in the air.

"It will work, Cu. Just wrap your belts around and you can carry the-m." "No, that's a bit..." "Compared to giving a piggyback, the field of vision is, clearer."

Several belts extended out from Cu's body, raising high up above her body as they wriggled.

"No, no thank you." "Really?" "No, really. I will walk on my own."

Naga pointed at Cu.

"Then walk on your own from the start! And you just need to lie prone after the battle begins. You won't be as tired as Selena!" "Ah, is that so?" "What a pain."

Naga had a troubled expression, then turned to face Cu.

"What?" "I had been thinking after seeing you carry the logs, those things on you,"

Naga stopped and pointed to Cu's belts.

"...Can they carry heavy loads, too?" "If I can maintain balance, it doesn't matter how heavy the thing is."

Naga then looked at Kay's body blatantly.

"Then, carrying Kay would not be a problem too." "Wait! If you put it that way, it sounds like I am incredibly heavy, don't do that!" "That's right. Kay is not heavy."

Cu said.

"Ain't that right?"

Kay agreed.

"Because her breasts are the smallest here."

“Pfft—”

Kay spat out the air in her mouth on reflex. Cu and Selena laughed heartily. Lela smiled too.

Their nervousness before the battle was more or less relieved. That was probably not what Cu and Kay were after, but their conversation should be improving the atmosphere before the battle.

“What a sharp tongue this Cu girl has.”

Kay looked up into the sky with a lamentable face, and Harrigan, who had been watching over them in silence, finally interjected.

“Stop playing, hurry and get into your holes.” “That’s right. Stay in the holes obediently and wait for the enemy to make their move at dawn.”

Naga urged them, and everyone got into their trenches. Naga stretched his legs out in the trench and covered his body with a cloth. After piling earth from around the hole on top of the cloth, he laid there prone. Only his face was uncovered, facing forward. Because of the thick clouds, light from the moon and the stars didn’t reach the ground and the surroundings were pitch dark. Even Naga, who had good night vision, couldn’t see clearly.

(Now, I can only see how things play out. I hate putting all my eggs in one basket, but that’s the only viable strategy this time. Besides the execution of the plan, luck will play an important part too.)

Naga’s body shivered inside the trench. He shivered, not only from the cold before dawn, but also from the excitement of a battle about to start. Naga and the witches hid in their dark trenches and waited silently for the battle to begin.

The sounds of battle finally started.

The ambush by the wooden puppet mob succeeded perfectly, the entire scouting unit that crossed the Schwein river was wiped out. After Naga and the others confirmed this, they got out of their holes and moved the wooden puppets forward. At the same time, they kept their distance from wooden puppets and advanced towards the river.

2nd Battalion

(Battalion Commander
Saeijder)

1st, 2nd, & 4th companies +
Battalion Headquarters

Map of Battle Transition I

On Standby

(The 8th Platoon)

Downstream

Upstream

River crossing

Schweiz River

2nd Company

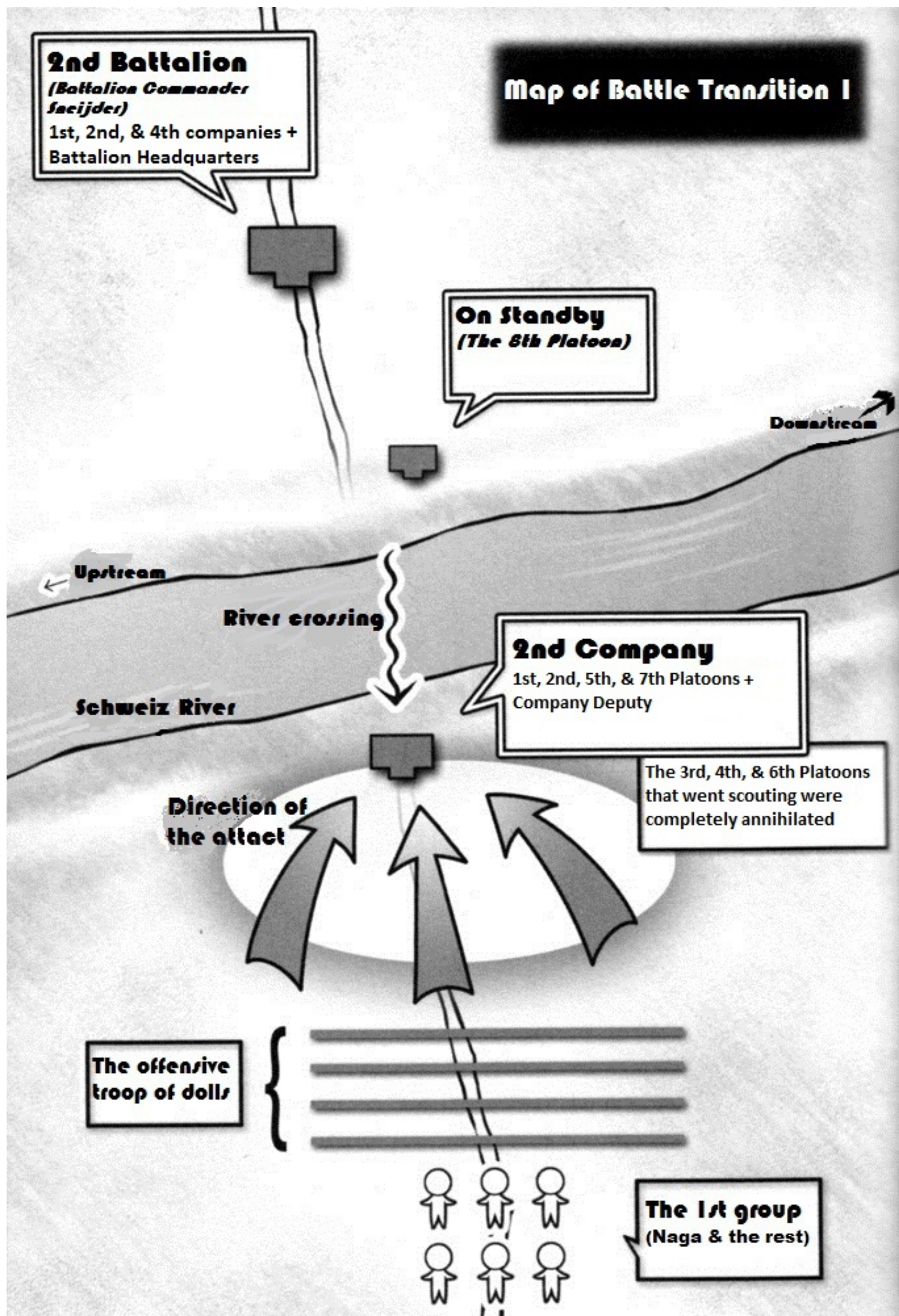
1st, 2nd, 5th, & 7th Platoons +
Company Deputy

The 3rd, 4th, & 6th Platoons
that went scouting were
completely annihilated

Direction of
the attack

The offensive
troop of dolls

The 1st group
(Naga & the rest)



Harrigan, who was controlling the puppets, walked in front along with Naga, followed, in order, by Lela, Selena, and Kay while Cu turned back to retrieve her's and Naga's horses.

Out of the five witches here, Cu and Ikushina from the 3rd group were more proficient in horsemanship, so Naga assigned the task to her. However, though she might be more proficient, she was actually 'not that good after all' (According to Naga).

Naga moved cautiously as Harrigan watched the sides carefully. In order to not leave any wooden puppets out, she had to focus on watching them. All the wooden puppets could move at the same time, but one or two puppets would mess up their movements and fall out of ranks occasionally. That's why Harrigan had to identify the puppets that moved strangely as early as possible, and return them to formation.

(The controls are smooth so far.)

In order to not disturb Harrigan, Naga said this to himself in his mind.

(However, the next phase will be the critical point. The second stage of a two stage shot, or rather, whether the second arrow can hit the target perfectly. That will decide the battle.)

Shortly after, the 2nd battalion of Cassandra's army entered the river and started crossing it. According to the observation of Heaven's Eyes by Selena, they numbered about four hundred, and must not be allowed to all cross at the same time. There were 260 wooden puppets that could still move, and even if they committed this entire force, the opponents were fully equipped soldiers. Their morale was high and they outmatched Naga and the others even if they relied on numbers alone.

But Naga's second arrow was to weaken the units crossing the river and separate them. Yuuki, who left the battlefield earlier on the air board, finally unleashed the second arrow. If the plan proceeded smoothly, Naga would be able to cut off part of the Cassandra kingdom's army and rout the units crossing the river. It would be difficult to predict how their main force would react after this. But after suffering heavy losses, it was unlikely they would continue their march towards the great cliff, in order to avoid further losses. That was Naga's

aim.

(I'm counting on you, Yuuki.)

Watching Yuuki, who turned into a small dot in the distance, Naga stared at her as if he was offering a prayer. Yuuki's air board appeared in the air upstream of the Schwein River where the dam was.

"She's here!"

Ais shouted as she stared at the sky, the other witches also looked up. The black dot became larger, and came close enough to distinguish Yuuki's face. Waving her hands on the air board, she yelled,

"Success success success!"

Ais and Nonoeru, who were watching Yuuki's air board intensely, showed cheerful expressions. Yuuki, who was heading straight for the river dam, shouted once more,

"Do it!"

Ais was standing on the river bank and had thick ropes coiled several times around her waist.

The ropes extended out behind her, and were tied to the logs used to block the river flow and build the dam. Ais used her strength to take a step forward. According to the plan, the ropes would shift the logs, and unleash the water that was held back, and the water pressure would break the dam... That was how it should go. However, despite using all her strength and her entire face turning red, Ais couldn't move forward.

"A-Ais?"

The moment Nonoeru looked at Ais worriedly, the ropes tied to Ais and the dam snapped loudly.

"Hyaa?"

Ais who was leaning forward with all her strength fell forward just like that. She steadied her footing with some effort and avoided falling onto her face, Ais saw that the ropes tied to her body had snapped and had a troubled face.

“To think the ropes would snap. We made the dam too sturdy.”

Yuuki, who was flying on the air board, landed hastily.

“Wait, what happened, Ais!?”

Ais looked at her with a troubled expression.

“As you can see, the ropes snapped.”

“The ropes snapped, what should we do!? If we don’t break the dam soon, all the enemy forces will cross the river!” “G-get the backup rope.”

Nonoeru looked anxiously at the other witches, but Ais’ voice was faster than the witches action.

“Wait!”

She stopped her comrades.

“We won’t make it even if we retie it with the backup ropes. If the ropes have the same toughness, it is very possible that they will snap again. If they snap again, we definitely won’t make it.” “T-then what should we do!?”

Yuuki pressed.

“There’s no other way, I have to dive underwater and break it directly.”
“Huh... Huhh!?”

Not just Yuuki, the other witches were also staring with their eyes wide open.

“B-But...” “Nonoeru!” “Y-Yes.” “I will dive into the water. You need to control the water from upstream, and let me go along with the flow to break the dam.”
“Ah... But...” “There is no time to think. If we don’t break the dam now, Naga will lose the battle. That means we will all lose the battle.” “But... Ais...” “Don’t worry, look, my body is tough, I’ll be fine even if the water hits me. Ah, but remember to fish me out after this.”

Ais winked. She might lose her life, but now was the crucial moment between victory and defeat. Ais acted as if she was at ease, forcing Nonoeru to make her decision.

“I understand, Ais. I will give it a try.”

Nonoeru replied with a pale face.

“Yuuki, return to the battlefield immediately after the dam breaks. Everyone else stay put and wait for Onee-san and Naga’s instructions. Understand?”

The rest of the witches— Yuuki, Jiiniasu, Eleonortha and Mimone nodded stiffly.

“Well then, let’s begin.”

Ais walked upstream, and Nonoeru followed. After a short distance upstream, Ais leapt into the air and dove into the water. At the same time, Nonoeru began chanting her spell.

“In the name of the wild river god, may the water rise, stand, align, destroy, flourish, swell, surge. The gods, the insubordinate, those who strife, those seeking vengeance, wash all of them away with this flood!”

The still lake water in the dam started rippling. Bubbles appeared and a wave surged. A flow could be seen, which turned into a whirlpool. The water around Ais seemed to have a will of its own, flowing rapidly downstream and slamming into the dam. Riding this wave, Ais bent her knees and straightened them explosively, her feet kicking the logs heavily. The logs cracked, and large amount of water flowed through the opening. Cracking noises could be heard all over the dam, and with a tremor, it collapsed under the weight of the water. Unable to resist the pressure of the water's flow, the dam broke into pieces.

With an ominous cracking noise, pieces of wood and splinters gushed downstream together with the wave. The water surging through the dam engulfed the shattered logs along with Ais’ body, flowing downstream mightily. The sound of logs colliding with each other and the roar of the river flowing reverberated throughout the area. No matter how tough Ais’ body was, if she got caught in the stream with those logs, she wouldn’t come out of it unharmed.

“A-Ais!”

Yuuki cried out nervously as she watched this scene.

“Follow her!”

After instructing her comrades, Nonoeru jumped into the water. Her voice disappeared into the water in no time.

Yuuki looked downstream with concern. At this moment, Mimone patted her shoulder.

“We will take care of the rest, Hurry on back, Yuuki.” “Ah, yes... Yes.” “I will help to search for Ais.” “Huh? Can we? Shouldn’t we stay put here...” “I can’t just stand here idly after seeing Ais in danger right? Just leaving one person here will be enough.” “I understand!”

Yuuki ran towards the place she left her air board, jumped onto it, and began chanting her spell. Her air board floated straight up.

“I’m leaving Ais to you—!”

Yuuki waved from the air, Mimone, Jiiniasu and Eleonortha waved in response.

“Leave it to us!”

Yuuki rode on the air board and flew downstream.

Part 3

Cassandra's 2nd battalion, minus the 80 men of 2nd company who fell under attack when they crossed the river in the beginning still had four hundred odd men left. The first company finished the crossing in no time and proceeded to spread out onto the plains.

The third company, which followed right after, finished their crossing too. The units left on the left bank started moving towards the river, and some of them had already started crossing.

“Naga, the third group is crossing the river!”

Selena, who was observing the enemy's movement, reported this in a near scream.

“Oh no, this is bad. It'll be too late to activate the trap if this continues, we'll have to face four hundred foes!”

In the face of this dire situation, Naga's expression turned gloomy. Harrigan looked hastily upstream, and then at the enemy forces crossing the river.

“How slow. Yuuki flew over and should have already reached them. Now is a good time to flood them too. Did something happen?”

Harrigan muttered to herself, “Very likely.”

Kay replied,

“Ais and the others engaging the enemy scouts... Is that possible?”

Naga refuted Kay's worries.

“No, that shouldn't be. The dam is set in a place the enemy scouts couldn't reach right?” “If not, why isn't the water coming?”

Kay asked and Naga stammered:

“No, that... I don't know.” “What should we do, Naga? If we wait any longer,

the entire enemy force will cross the river.”

When he heard Harrigan’s question, Naga reviewed the situation once again. It wasn’t clear why the trap hadn’t activated yet, but the water would come if the dam got broken, it didn’t matter how. The probability of the enemy discovering the trap was low, and spending more time than expected to break the dam was within expectations.

(If so, it should be just a matter of time before the dam breaks and the water comes. Waiting here idly will just let them cross the river and form up successfully. It’s a bit dangerous, but we need to confuse the enemy, so let’s attack now.)

To be honest, it wasn’t just a little dangerous, but very dangerous. However, no matter what, they couldn’t sit idly by. There was no choice.

Advance? Escape? What should he choose? If they escaped, they could avoid dying in battle, but the chances of victory in the future would be low.

No, there would be no chance at all.

(The only option is to advance then.)

Naga concluded.

(And Ais is a reliable witch. If she’s there, it will definitely work.)

Naga lifted his head and told Harrigan with determination.

“We’ll attack the units that have crossed to this side of the river.” “... Will that be fine?” “The breaking of the dam has probably been delayed due to some circumstances. If we attack the enemy now, the water will come midway. That way, we won’t stray too far from the plan.”

With two hundred enemy troops already across the river and more units to follow, the situation had already deviated from the plan, but Naga remained committed to it. Even though the witches were far stronger than the humans, if they fell into doubt and unease, they wouldn’t be able to display even half of their true strength. That’s why Naga strengthened his tone.

“Also, the one in charge of that place is Ais right? She won’t fail a mission on the level of breaking a dam.” “Is that so? Alright, let’s go to war.”

Harrigan was resolute too.

“Lela, send the signal. There won’t be time to send a smoke signal after we attack. Call Ikushina and the others from the back.” “Yes, Onee-sama.”

Lela wrote on a talisman swiftly and burnt it. A blue flame erupted from the talisman, sending bluish white smoke into the sky.

“Alright, advance. Kay and I will stay on the frontline. Lela will be Harrigan’s guard. Selena will continue observing the enemy. Remember to tell Cu when she comes back too.” “Yes.”

Kay waved her hands.

“I got, it.”

Lela picked up the shield to block arrows.

With the first company of the 2nd battalion as the target, the wooden puppets began their assault. That might be so, but their speed was anything but ‘assault’ like.

And of course, the Cassandra army noticed.

“Something is coming!” “What is that!?” “That’s them! The puppets that attacked our recon team!” “They’ll attack with arrows!” “Archers, we’ll return fire with arrows too!” “Maintain formation!”

The enemy became tense, with roars and shouts everywhere.

“Attack!”

Naga said to Harrigan behind him. She stopped and issued the order to the puppets to fire a volley. Sixty arrows were loose in the first volley, followed by fifty more that shook the air.

Cries resounded from the enemy. Dozens of arrows flew from the enemy, hitting many of the wooden puppets. But each puppet was only hit once or twice at the most. It was not enough to stop the puppets. Harrigan did her best to supply mana to the puppets and keep them moving.

A short distance behind the puppets were Naga, who was holding a shield and down on one knee with Kay, who was standing motionlessly in place. Behind

the two of them, Harrigan continued supplying mana, with Lela standing beside her with a large shield. The shield Lela held was made from wood, so it was lacking in hardness— Metal shields were heavy and would weaken magic, so it was out of the question— So she pasted talismans all over it to increase its toughness. Arrows flying from afar won't be able to pierce it then.

At a distance between 40 to 50 yards, the puppets and the 1st company of the 2nd battalion fired arrows at each other. The 3rd company behind also joined the fray. The 1st and 3rd company numbered almost two hundred men altogether. Troops other than archers also picked up bows and retaliated with their arrows. The number of soldiers that fell and puppets that were silenced increased.

Naga estimated that 60 to 70 puppets had stopped moving. Less than two hundred puppets remained. On the other front, the casualties from the two companies numbered about 30 to 40. About 160 to 170 men remained. It would be great if the exchange of volleys could continue, but the enemy still has reinforcements. If the other unit crossing the river, and the 4th company was to join in, Naga's side wouldn't be able to keep up with just the puppets.

The water wasn't here yet.

(We can't continue!?)

With the battle plan in disarray, Naga muttered to himself in his mind.

If they wanted to flee, now would be the time. Once the enemy breaks free and the battle becomes chaotic, some of his comrades would definitely fall. The witch camp was extremely lacking in numbers, so both Naga and Harrigan wished to avoid any casualties. Also, even if they were to run now, the chances of someone dying was very high.

(What should we do? Staying here is dangerous. Running is dangerous. Then...)

Naga, who usually makes sharp decisions, was in a dilemma, which was a rare sight. At this moment, a roar came from the river and into his ears.

"It's here!"

Naga unconsciously moved the shield away, stood up, and looked.

Straightening his back and looking towards the river, Naga's view was blocked by terraces and couldn't see it directly.

(Of course.)

Naga clicked his tongue and knelt again as an arrow flew his way.

"Watch out!"

Kay, who was standing beside Naga, rushed before him and opened her arms.

Clank, a metallic sound could be heard and the arrow fell to the ground.

"Wait, Naga, it's too dangerous to lower your shield." "Ah... Ahhh, sorry."

Naga apologized, glanced at the arrow and asked Kay.

"Are you hurt?" "Me? Look, I'm not hurt at all.

Kay turned back and pointed to her chest and belly. Her skin glimmered a metallic glow. Kay pointed to her skin that was gleaming silver with a smile, and tap on it, making a hard metal sound.

Kay, who stood boldly without a shield, could harden her body with magic. After hardening her body, she would become tough enough to repel swords, spears and arrows. Kay uses her hardened fists to beat up her foes and punt her adversaries with hardened feet, a rare physical type amongst the witches.

"So hard even the arrows couldn't pierce through."

Naga sighed in relief.

"I see. How should I put this, you are really amazing." "Hehe~~ That's right."

Kay turned her back towards Naga once more.

"In that case, Naga doesn't need to worry and can just hide behind me."

Kay's cocky attitude made Naga smile wryly. He immediately returned to his serious expression and looked at the river terraces. The sound of the arrows with the yell of the soldiers made it unclear, but there was a soft sound that was out of place. It was becoming louder. That's right. It was the sound of surging water flowing downstream.

"Just in the nick of time."

Naga sighed in relief.

The 4th company of the 2nd battalion was crossing the river. An unfathomable sound came from upstream. That should be the sound of water flowing. Since this was a river, there was nothing strange about hearing sound of water flowing. The strange thing was the roar of a river surging that should only be heard when there was a lot of water. The depth of the river didn't even reach a man's waist. It was cloudy in the sky, but there weren't any thick clouds that would bring rain. Upstream was the same, showing no signs of dark clouds that would herald heavy rain. There weren't any factors that would cause a surge of water that could make such loud noises. But, the sound came anyways.

“What happened?” “What is that sound?”

Several soldiers who were turning their head to search for the source of the sound scream unconsciously.

A tsunami-like wave roared down from upstream. The sky high waves made it look like a completely different river. Compared to the river that was just a yard or two at most, the wave was twice the height of a man, covering the surface of the river completely. The water came at a speed that was never seen here before, surging down fiercely. The troops that were traversing the river were engulfed in no time and washed downstream. Not just the foot soldiers. Even the cavalry couldn't withstand the flow and was washed away. Only the heads of a few horses could be seen struggling above the surface of the water. The riders were forced to release their reins and were lost in the waters. The fierce flood didn't last for very long and the water level gradually dropped.

– Even so.

For the Cassandra Army, the impact was intense. The soldiers who made it across to the right bank, the lucky ones who had not started crossing, and the battalion headquarters staff officers and soldiers were all stunned silent and just stared at the catastrophe before them blankly.

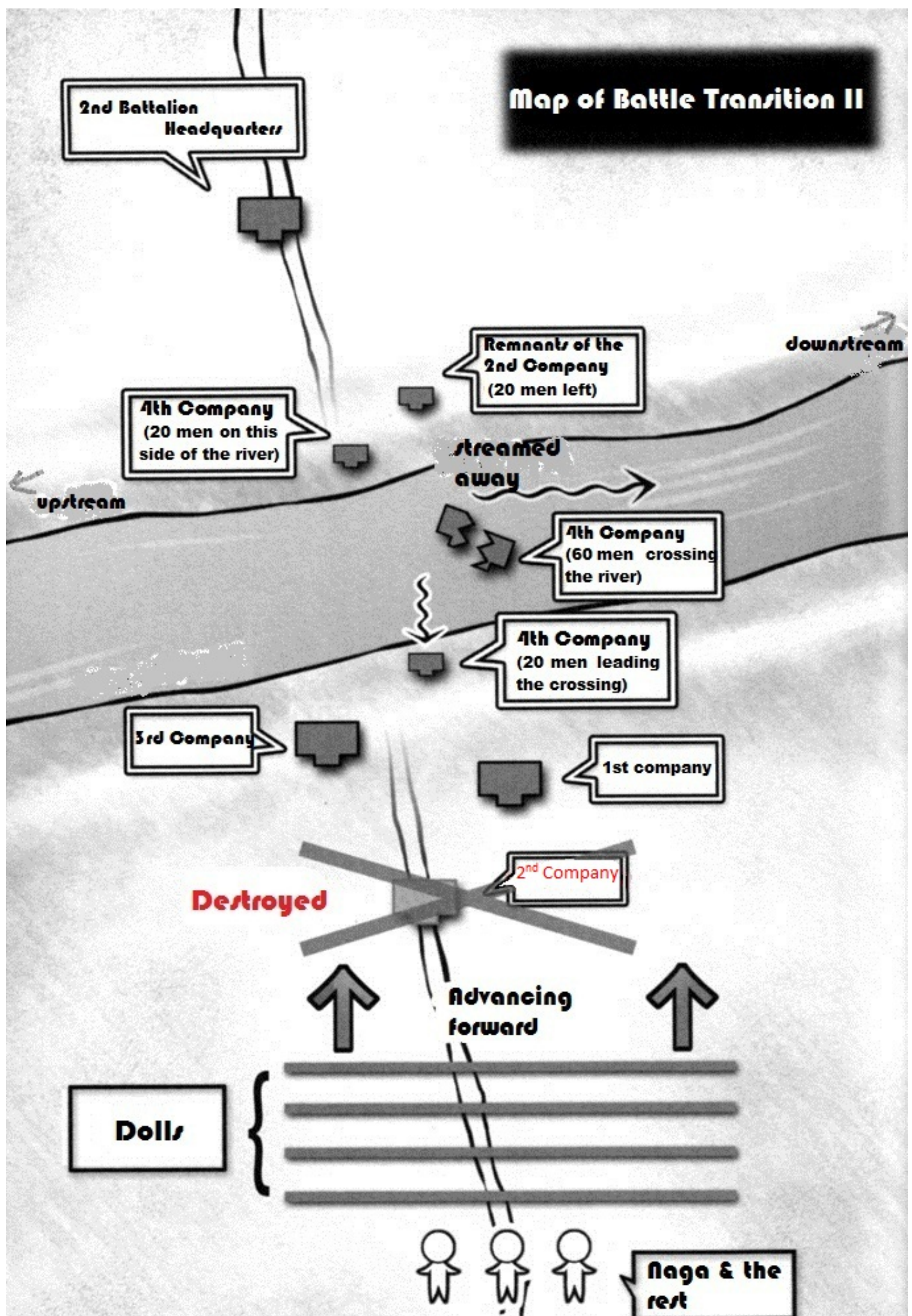
Part 4

“Naga-san!”

Selena ran over with her shield.

“Oh, Selena.” “The enemies’ third wave was washed away by the flood as they were crossing the river!”

Map of Battle Transition II



Selena said in a higher pitch than normal, and her breathing was ragged because she sprinted all the way here... But that wasn't all.

"Hyaa!"

Kay jumped at the news.

"Is that so!? How was it!?"

Naga's reply also got louder.

"Of the number of troops that were crossing at that time, 50 to 60 of them were washed away. But the soldiers who made it across and those who haven't are all shellshocked."

Naga knocked his fist into his palm.

"Great! Let's do something next!"

(However, there are more than two hundred who made it across, it would be troublesome if we don't wipe them out.)

Naga shook his head to stop the uneasiness from gripping his heart.

"Harrigan!"

"I'm here!"

Harrigan ran to him with Lela who was holding a shield.

"Move the last row of wooden puppets forward. Maintain distance from the enemy, just attacking with arrows should be enough. Don't let them notice how many puppets we have left."

"I got it."

Harrigan moved the puppets towards the river.

At this moment, the seven witches from the third group and Cu who went to retrieve the horses appeared.

"Oh, showing up just at the right moment."

Naga took the reins of the horse, and Cu, who was riding on another horse called out to him.

"What's the matter?"

“Naga, can we ride together?”

It seemed that she wanted to ride together with Naga. Two sets of saddles were prepared just in case, so there wasn't any problem with them riding together.

“If I'm here, there would be no need to fear the arrows of the enemy.”

The front ends of several belts wrapped around Cu squirmed in the air.

“That's right. Alright, get behind me...”

“It would be better for me to defend in front. Is that okay?”

“Alright, let's go with your idea.”

Naga got onto the saddle behind Cu with his left leg. Kicking off the ground with his other leg, he pushed himself onto the horse. With both hands on the reins, Cu would be inside Naga's embrace if he leaned forward a little more.

“Wait... This feels wrong. Never mind, as long as Cu is fine with it.”

Harrigan mumbled after seeing Naga holding the reins after mounting the horse.

“Naga!”

“What now?”

“There are less than a hundred puppets left! And they are being broken through!”

“The enemy's number?”

"More than a hundred."

“It's fine even if the puppets get wiped out, reduce their troops by at least half.”

“I will try.”

Harrigan returned to her task of manipulating the puppets after answering.

“The enemy who have broken through will be engaged by me, Cu, Kay and Ikushina. Neneru and Arurukan will support us. Linna, Linne, and Narcissus, protect Harrigan and Selena!”

““Understood!””

Kay and Ikushina mounted the other horse.

“Beware of stray arrows.”

When they heard Naga’s warning, Neneru and Arurukan picked up their shields to block arrows. Cu was with Naga, so he didn’t need to use a shield. Ikushina was riding with Kay, so she didn’t need to raise her shield high up.

“Slowly advance, and stay behind me.”

Naga pulled his reins after saying that. The horse he was riding with Cu, and the horse Kay and Ikushina was riding started trotting forward, with Neneru and Arurukan following behind.

Naga's group engaged in a fierce battle with the two companies that had crossed the river. The rest of the second battalion on the left bank— one hundred men from the battalion headquarters company, the twenty odd survivors of the 2nd company who were held in reserve and the twenty odd members of the 4th company who had yet to cross the river, finally came to their senses. However, the remnants of the 2nd company had already lost their will to fight and couldn’t move. It was the same for the survivors of the 4th company who lucked out and didn’t cross the river earlier. If the commander and his staff from headquarters weren’t watching them, they would have run away.

“Commander, the 1st and 3rd company crossed the river and are under the witches’ attack! Please give your orders!”

One staff officer requested with a pale face, which made Sneijder’s face turn red from rage.

“Get the remaining soldiers from 2nd and 4th company to cross the river immediately! Headquarters will follow right behind! Head for the river!”

“Yes Sir!”

The staff officers immediately sent messengers to notify the company captains.

The 4th company was hit by the water when they were crossing the river, and

more than half of them were washed away. About twenty soldiers made it across before the flood. The remaining soldiers on this side of the river was also about twenty. That meant about sixty men were gone. The company captain was nowhere to be found, he was probably washed away by the water along with his subordinates. Since that was the case, the headquarter commander wanted the remnants of the 2nd and 4th company to hurry across the river to link up with the twenty odd soldiers stranded on the other side of the river, or they wouldn't be able to save the 1st and 3rd company that were under attack. The river had already subsided to the same level before the flash flood, so there wasn't any problems with crossing the river so they should do it now.

At that instant.

The remaining dozens of soldiers from the 4th company who had witnessed their comrades being washed away by the river didn't move even after receiving their orders. It was the same for the remnants of the 2nd company. The soldiers who stood at the river bank idly only got in the way of the battalion headquarters company that were moving towards the river.

"What are you all standing around for! Soldiers of the 2nd and 4th company, hurry up and advance!"

Sneijder roared, and the deputy commander reported in a voice as if screaming.

"T-That's because the soldiers are scared out of their wits."

Sneijder's face flushed in rage.

"I don't care, get the cavalry to run through them!"

"B-But..."

"If we dally around, the 1st and 3rd company on the opposite bank will be wiped out! If they don't move, I'll execute them on the spot!"

Sneijder placed his hands on the sword hilt on his waist. The deputy commander was shocked by this action and immediately dashed out.

The hundred odd soldiers from the battalion headquarters company squeezed past the surviving soldiers and headed for the river.

“The waters have subsided. Do not fear, follow my lead!”

Sneijder shouted at the cowardly troops and head straight into the river.

At this moment. The water rippled and the surface of the river wavered.

“What?”

Sneijder stared at the disturbance, and water came flying at him. Thin, sharp spears of water. Before he knew what had happened, Sneijder’s abdomen was pierced by the water spears.

“Waarrgghhh!?”

Sneijder opened his eyes wide, and finally realized something had stabbed into his stomach.

“Wa... Water...?”

Sneijder reached out with trembling hands and grabbed the transparent water spear that pierced his armour and belly.

- Shashasha.*

His arm lost strength and the water spear lost its shape, and scattered to the side.

“Wi... Witch...”

Sneijder collapsed to the side and splashed into the water.

“Commander—!”

The staff officers, who were escorting him, screamed as if they were the ones who got stabbed.

The one who attacked Sneijder was Nonoeru. While pursuing Ais, Nonoeru came downstream and rescued Ais midway. Ais was brought to the riverbank and was mostly unharmed— She had some cuts and bruises, but nothing serious like fractures— After Nonoeru checked on her, she let Ais continue to rest and drifted further downstream to observe the battle. When she was hiding in the water and watching the surroundings, she noticed an officer crossing the river, so she went near and attacked.

(Commander!?)

Wearing thin clothes sticking tightly onto her skin, Nonoeru realized the enemy she killed was higher ranked than she expected, which surprised her too. He was wearing more extravagant armor than the rank and file, and charged to the front after issuing orders to those around him. That's why Nonoeru thought he was rather high ranking.

(I killed someone so important that it even shocked me.)

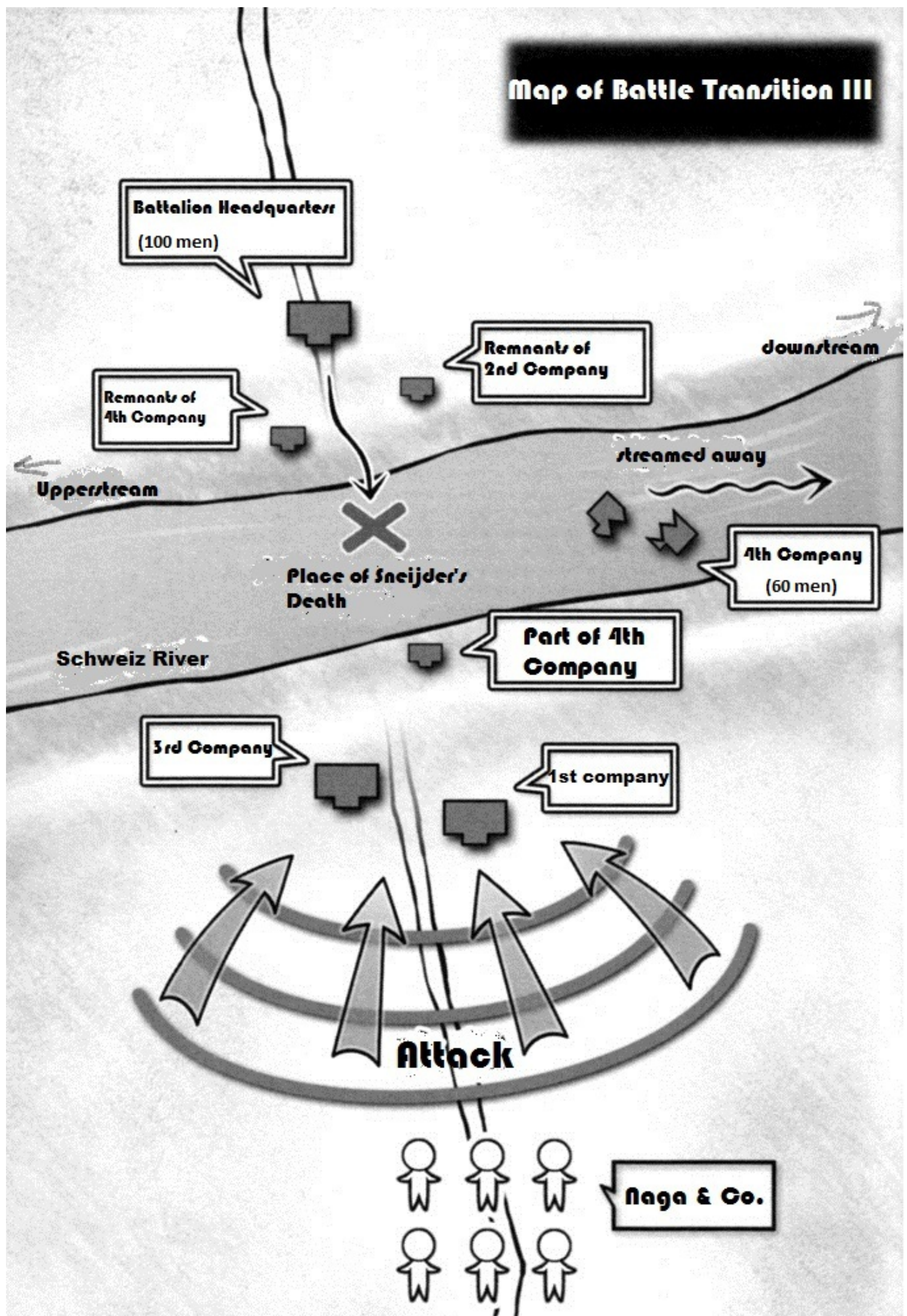
Nonoeru was proficient in controlling water with magic, and could breathe in the dissolved air from the water. That's why she could dive into the water and move around. She could easily stay submerged for half a watch(a watch = 2 hours), and diffuse the light refraction in the water to make it hard to spot her. If she was in the water, she could sneak close without the soldiers noticing.

'I will kill one or two platoon leaders if things go smoothly...' That was what Nonoeru thought, but she didn't expect the one she took out to be the battalion commander.

(Now the unit won't be able to function properly.)

Just like Nonoeru imagined, the soldiers behind the battalion commander were in an uproar. They had just witnessed the death of their battalion commander and didn't know how the commander had been killed.

Map of Battle Transition III



In their minds, they were sure such an attack was the doing of the witches. That's all they could think at this point.

"Witches!"

"There's a witch in the river!"

"Run away!"

"They'll attack us with strange magic!"

"Get away from the river now!"

The battalion headquarters soldiers ignored the orders of the platoon leaders and staff officers and ran with their backs to the river.

"If we don't run, we'll end up like the commander!"

"Witches! The witches are attacking!"

"Hey! Stop right there!"

"Come back! Come back right now!"

"Don't move on your own!"

"Get out of the way!"

"Don't block me!"

The platoon leaders and staff officers were knocked aside by the stampeding troops and trampled by the soldiers who followed behind.



The chain of command was in upheaval, the units had lost all control, throwing the entire group into chaos. That way, this group won't be able to threaten Naga, Harrigan and the others on the other side of the river. Nonoeru judged that she didn't need to stay any longer.

(Let's go back to the place Ais is resting.)

Controlling the water flow skilfully, she went against the current and left.

The two hundred men from the 1st and 3rd company that crossed the river were engaged in an intense battle with the puppets manipulated by Harrigan. But the twenty men from the 4th company that crossed the river just stood idly by the river bank. Just with the arrow attacks, the casualties in the 1st and 3rd company were over fifty. The number of puppets also fell drastically. It was obvious that the number of arrows flying around had dropped. The soldiers from the 3rd company heard from their captain that their allies were washed away while crossing the river. They would probably suffer the same fate if they were to turn back. This attack could only be used once, but the Cassandra army never thought about the possibility that this was a trap laid by Naga and the witches. They suspected that this was the magic of the witches. There was no way to return to the river. In order for them to survive, the only way was to defeat the puppets army in front of them and force a path through. Since witches that could cast grand spells to control the river appeared, the witch won't attack the place where the puppets were being manipulated. That's what they thought.

"We will be pursued and attacked if our backs are to the enemy. Since we can't go back to the river, we can only forge ahead. The enemy are just small puppets, there is nothing to fear in melee combat! Move forward, forward!"

Half of the surviving soldiers picked up shields to block the arrows, the other half continued firing as the Cassandra army closed in on the puppets. The captain of the 3rd company had grasped the weakness of the puppets.

Harrigan was controlling a large number of puppets that performed simple actions repeatedly.

Even if the captain didn't realize this point, his judgement of charging the puppets to open a path in order to survive was correct. After all, puppets were

just puppets, they couldn't fire powerful, accurate shots like humans. They could fend off most of the arrows just by raising their shields. One person will raise the shield, the other one will hide behind and fire off shots. However, there were many puppets and won't fall after being hit by one arrow, so the Cassandra army was hesitant to advance.

The counterfire had reduced the number of puppets further, so Harrigan rearranged the formation into three ranks. Each rank shot their arrows at a different angle. Puppets shooting almost parallel to the ground. Puppets shooting 30 to 40 degrees up. And a group of puppets shooting at an even higher angle, as if they were aiming for the mountains. If they placed the shields to defend the front, they would be hit by the arrows falling over head. If they raised the shield above their head, they couldn't block the arrows flying straight at them.

The soldiers of the 1st and 3rd company forged ahead with steeled resolve, but they lost thirty men before they even reached the puppets. On top of the 60 to 70 casualties from the earlier exchange of fire, they had lost about a hundred men. Only a hundred soldiers were left. The vanguard of these hundred have charged into the front rank of the puppets. It became a melee battle, which put the puppets at an overwhelming disadvantage. The Cassandra soldiers held a shield in their left hand and a sword in their right. The soldiers holding bows threw them down and drew their swords and with swords in hand, the troops slashed at the puppets. Unable to dodge, the puppets were cut down one after another. The number of puppets in the first rank diminished rapidly. All the puppets committed to the battle by Naga and Harrigan would be completely wiped out soon.

Time was very short.

The puppets in subsequent rows couldn't shoot anymore and joined the fray. Naga and Cu, as well as Kay and Ikushina, who were on horses, were followed by Neneru and Arurukan, who were on foot, engaged the enemy too.

Part 4

In the face of the Cassandra army wielding swords and kicking with their feet, the puppets couldn't react immediately and got entrenched in a chaotic battle. Fights broke out all over the place with no semblance of order. The puppets didn't swing any swords, and could only fire arrows. They couldn't aim, and only performed the simple actions of firing them. Despite their effort to continue firing arrows, with the puppets' dull movements, more and more started to fall. However, no matter how they bashed or kicked, many of the lifeless puppets would still get up. After rising, they would continue to fire as commanded. With arrows flying from everywhere at extremely close range, the battlefield became really dangerous. Since the puppets couldn't aim, the arrows were loosed randomly. Naturally, some of the arrows hit their fellow puppets too. Being struck by the arrows of fellow puppets, cleaved by the enemy, and kicked by men and horses alike damaged their magic circuits, and caused even more puppets to fall silent.

The casualties of the enemy were also increasing. The wooden puppets rolling on the ground and the injured who fell, were trampled by the horses and men who came from behind. The puppets performed better than expected in the chaotic battle. With their shots parallel to the ground, they hit the soldiers' feet. The armour on their legs was thin. Arrows that hit would be deeply embedded, and made them fall. Even though the wounds weren't mortal, troops that couldn't run or walk were in no shape to fight. It turned into a battle of attrition. Even though it was that kind of fight, even more puppets were falling. There were about 70 enemies left, but less than 50 puppets left standing. Among them were puppets with magic circuits so heavily damaged that they couldn't move at all.

The vanguard of the enemy had already made it past the wooden puppets. If they broke through completely and regrouped, it would be rather troubling. Riding on his steed, Naga galloped towards the men that broke through. The

Cassandra soldiers, who had to give their all to fight the puppets, didn't notice Naga and the others, who were waiting behind the puppets. The troops raised their heads in surprise when they heard the hoofbeats of horses, only to find Naga and Ikushina's horses right before them. Taking the reins with his left hand and swinging his blade with his right, Naga sent the heads of the enemies flying.

"What!?" "It's the enemy!" "Why are the witches attacking on horseback!?"

The sudden attack from the two horses sent the soldiers who had broken through the puppets into chaos once more. Kay, who jumped down from the horse, also started attacking the soldiers nearby. Her fists were just like metal, anyone who was hit on the head would definitely faint. Anyone kicked in the knees would definitely have their kneecaps shattered. Even though Kay's body was hardened, she didn't have Ais' strength, and couldn't send her foes flying with just a touch. Her attacks would be less effective if she hit their armour, and her adversaries would be able to bear the impact. When the enemy counterattacked with swords, Kay would block the blades with her bare wrist.

"What is with this girl!?"

"Monster!"

"You guys are rude!"

When their blade snapped in two, any soldiers who stood dumbfounded would taste Kay's fists. As expected, it was a one hit K.O. Kay showed her might and disrupted the enemy formation, allowing Naga and Ikushina to charge in with their horses. Cu used her belts to grab enemies. The enemy soldiers who couldn't move were cut down by Naga as he rode by. Ikushina used fire magic to attack the enemy, and then got out of the chaotic battlefield immediately. She couldn't fight in a melee battle. Or rather, most witches couldn't handle hand to hand combat. Kay and Cu, who could duke it out calmly with their adversaries, were the exception.

Neneru and Arurukan watched the battle a short distance away. More and more soldiers broke through the puppets' formation. As expected, there weren't many puppets left. Those who made it through were assaulted by Neneru and Arurukan's magic attacks. They weren't able to use large scale

magic in a chaotic battle. One misstep and they would hit their own allies. And if they hit Naga, who probably didn't have any magic resistance, it would be terrible. Hence the two of them took care of the simple task of attacking with small scale spells.

Harrigan, who had given up on the puppets, also joined the fray. She cut off some of her own hair, turned the strands hard and spiky, and then threw them at the enemies, making the soldiers fall one after another. Unlike Kay and Cu, Harrigan didn't have outstanding defensive capabilities and couldn't throw herself into the melee. She kept at a distance and attacked from range with her hair. Taking care not to hit Naga, Cu, and Kay, who had charged into the midst of the enemy, Harrigan's attacks diminished their adversaries' numbers drastically.

At this moment, a large fireball appeared above the enemy. That was Lela's magic.

"Wahh!"

"What is that!?"

With Naga, Cu and Kay fighting amidst the enemy, she couldn't hit them with her fireball. But just tossing a few of them out was enough to confuse them. And finally, the last blow. No, it should be the last person.

Yuuki, on her air board high in the sky, could be seen descending at amazing speed. She might have come a bit too early, but she was in the nearby vicinity of the river, observing the battle to see if it was proceeding smoothly.

"Oh, she's here!"

Naga cheered when he saw Yuuki. The enemy was holding swords and shields, no one was holding bows. In a situation like this, Yuuki was nigh invincible.

"Dance of wind blades!"

Strong winds surrounded the rapidly descending Yuuki. Several wind blades appeared and flew towards the ground rapidly. The blades were so sharp that it could slice open any armour. A few bloodied soldiers fell.

Assaulted by Yuuki from the sky, cut down by Naga's blade, grabbed by Cu's belts, and pummelled by Kay's punches and kicks. Neneru, Arurukan and Harrigan's magic on top of that sapped the enemy's will to fight.

"Seems that will be it."

The captain of the 1st captain turned his horse around after seeing the fierce attacks of the witches. His lieutenants, who were fighting in the vicinity, retreated together with their captain. When the remaining soldiers realized their captain had fled, they started to run too. The 3rd company captain was killed in action, his body nowhere to be found.

"Great! The enemies have fled!"

Seeing the rest of the soldiers turning tail and running, Kay clapped happily. Kay was still energetic, but the other witches were panting hard.

They mustn't push themselves.

They routed the enemy in the end, but they will be back after gathering their wits.

"I will pursue that captain! It's fine to ignore the other soldiers."

Naga rode with Cu on the horse, turning it around after grabbing the reins. Kicking the horse with his feet, he put his hands onto the head of the horse.

"Ah, I will go too! Hear that, Ixine!?"

Kay waved, and Ikushina came to her on horseback.

"Let me get on, follow Naga quick!"

Ikushina pulled Kay up and chased Naga in a hurry. Naga and Ikushina's horses were not some famous breed, but they didn't sprint all out in the battle, and still had stamina left. On the other hand, the horses of the captain and his four lieutenants were already exhausted after being worked hard.

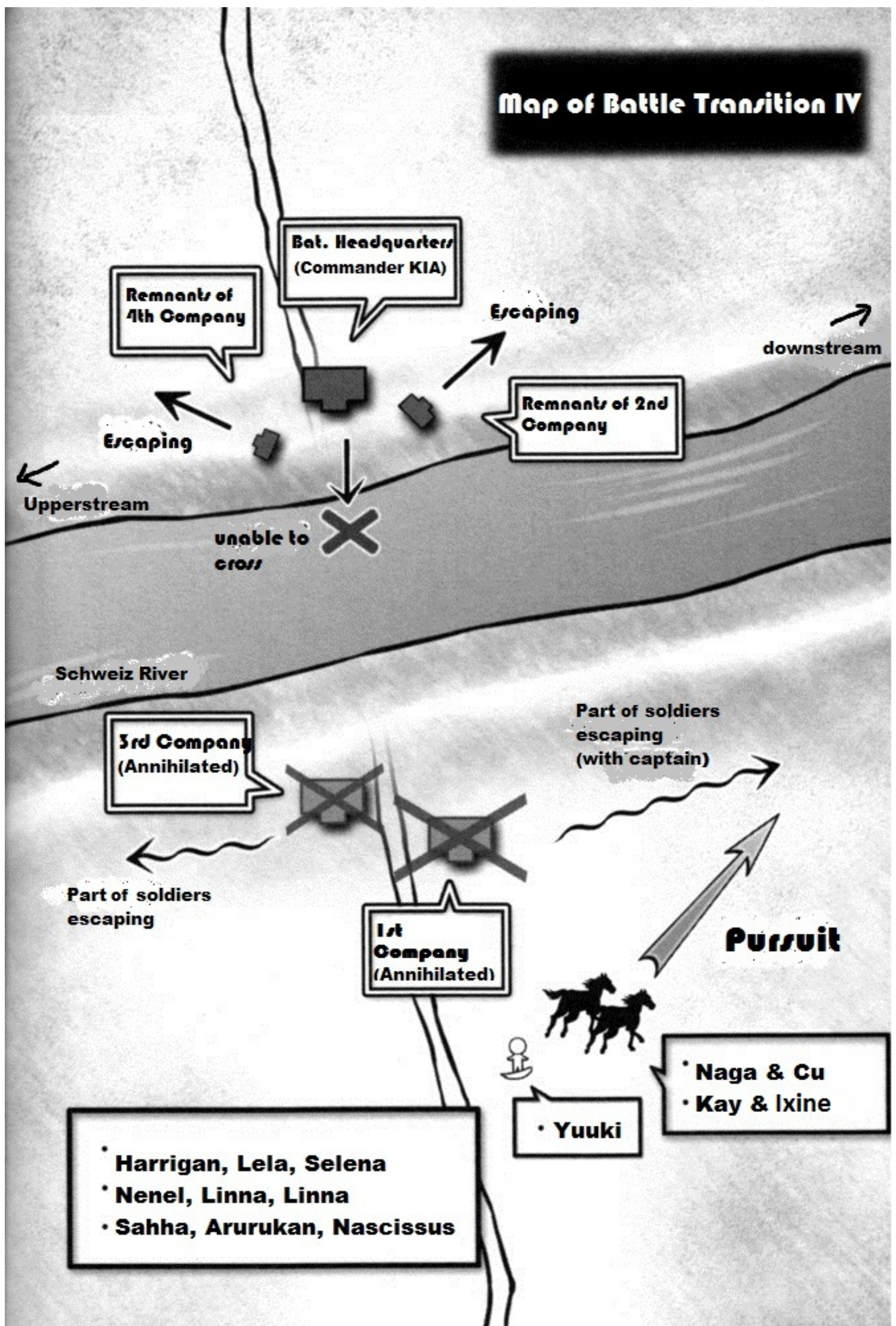
They gradually pulled closer.

"Wait, wait!"

A familiar voice came from the sky and Naga made an annoyed face.

"I won't allow you to hog all the fun!"

Map of Battle Transition IV



Flying a few yards above Naga's galloping horses, Yuuki waved as she flew at a matching speed.

"Not just me, Ikushina and Kay came too."

"Like I said! I am the type who leaves the best prey for last!"

"Ahh, alright, alright."

Naga replied.

"Come along, but be careful." "You don't need to tell me that!"

Naga grabbed the reins with his left hand. Yuuki increased her mana output. Ikushina and Kay's horse was right behind them.

The Lieutenants they were catching up with turned to look with shocked eyes. That was expected. There was actually a man in the witches' camp. Earlier, they didn't have time to observe Naga closely and only focused on the battle at hand. A Lieutenant relaxed his hold on the reins too much due to shock and his horse slowed down. Naga used that chance to catch up.

"What are you..."

Naga swung his sword in silence. The head of the Lieutenant separated from his body and flew into the air. His body trembled and fell to the ground. The other four gulped. Not just the enemy, even Cu, who shared a horse with him, and Yuuki, who was flying in the air, gulped.

"W-What happened, who is that fellow!?"

"Why is there a man among the witches!?"

"Who are you!?"

Ignoring the shouts from his foes, Naga moved towards another horse. The man swung his sword in a panic, but his wrist was caught by Cu's belt.

"Ug... Uwahh!"

The belt remained tight despite his effort to break free.

"Ohh, sorry Cu."

"Please don't, mind."

Naga drew near and swung his blade. Separating the head of the man from his body. Cu released the hold of her belt and the man tumbled onto the ground.

“Yeee!”

Three left. Two of the men didn’t dare to look back, fleeing on their horse with all of their might. But one person stayed behind and drew the sword on his waist. He still had fighting spirit. This man was the captain, Naga’s target. At this moment, Ikushina’s horse finally caught up.

“Wah, is that a one on one duel?”

Kay muttered, and Ikushina nodded her head repeatedly.

“We can’t get in the way.”

They kept a distance away and watched Naga and the enemy, who were facing off against each other. Yuuki, who was on the air board, didn’t interfere either, and merely gulped. The captain took a stance with his sword in front of him asked calmly: “Are you a witch too?”

“Me? I am just a human.”

“Why are you in league with the witches!?”

“Well, to repay them the debt of a meal and a night of lodging.”

The man looked confused for the first time.

“What kind of reason...”

“You were really brave while directing the battle. I like that. So, are you willing to surrender?”

When he heard what Naga said, the man’s baffled expression gradually faded.

“Don’t look down on me. You’re an enemy of God and men, you dog of the witches!”

Naga smiled wryly and whispered to Cu behind him,

“He really hates you girls.”

“That man, hates witches. I, hate him too.”

Cu's tone expressed her disgust.

"You are a human, but you have turned on your own kind, a grave sin!"

The captain sneered at Naga. Naga laughed heartily.

"Is that so? Seems like talking anymore would be a waste of time."

"I am Edwards, the captain of the 1st company, 2nd battalion from the Cassandra Kingdom's black forest invasion campaign! Say your prayers to the holy spirits! Confess your sins to God and beg for his mercy!"

Naga reached for the talisman Lela stuck onto the back of his neck.

(I don't know what he is saying, but he is probably stating his name and title.)



Naga responded to his opponent on reflex and shouted, “My name is Oda Saburo Nobunaga! Take the name of your killer to hell with you!”

(Oda Saburo?)

(Noble Naga?)

(Huh, is that true?)

The three people who were watching this scene a short distance away open their eyes wide in surprise.

‘Naga’ means ‘Dragon King’, but with the term ‘Noble’ before it, it would mean ‘Holy Dragon King’. The three of them were shocked. The moment Cu heard Naga state his name, she grabbed onto the neck of the horse tightly.

(Oda Saburo Noble Naga? That’s his name?)

With such a grand name, it was only natural for the witches to win overwhelmingly, Cu sighed. On the other hand, Yuuki shook her head strongly, as if she was trying to chase away a nightmare.

(No no no, impossible impossible. There is no way this lecherous man is the ‘Noly Dragon King’! He just remembered his name and is stating it, right?”

Yuuki thought as Naga locked eyes with the enemy captain once again.

“Cu, I want to duel with that guy, can you get off for now?”

Cu shifted her body hurriedly and jumped off the horse.

“Don’t need to interfere.”

Cu nodded quietly and retreated to the back. Naga stared at the captain once again. The air about them had a tension that made others stiff. The palms of the witches were sweating. The next instant, both men charged their horses towards each other. Naga and Edwards swung their blades and the sharp clang of metal echoed. Edwards held a thin sword, Naga’s blade was not much sturdier. After their blades clashed a few times, both weapons were half ruined.

“Tch!”

Edwards tossed aside his sword, attempting to take out his back up short sword from his clothes, but he was too late. Naga pushed forward on his horse

and swung his blade. Edwards' head flew into the air. His headless body sprayed blood high into the air, and collapsed lifeless from his horse.

(Amazing!)

Naga's martial skills made Ikushina and Kay open their eyes wide. Naga swung his blade to clear the blood on it, and returned it to the sheath on his left hip. He looked up into the sky, and then at Ikushina and Kay's horse.

"No point in staying here. Let's go back." "Ah... Ahh, erm..."

Ikushina and Kay snapped out of their trance and locked eyes with Yuuki. Naga rode to Cu's side and reached his hand out to her. Cu reached out for Naga too. Naga grabbed her hand and pulled Cu up onto the horse. Cu was lighter than he expected, and her body was pulled close to Naga because he used too much strength. Cu couldn't straddle onto the saddle, and was instead pulled to Naga's side into a pseudo-embrace. It felt like the two were hugging each other.

"Ah~~"

"Eh..."

The two looked at each other awkwardly. Yuuki's angry roar came in no time.

"W-Wait! What are the two of you so embarrassed about!?"

Cu changed her body position that was intimately close to Naga's. Straddling the horse and putting her feet into the foot rest, she grabbed the neck of the horse and sat on the saddle. Kay and Ikushina smiled mischievously when they saw Cu's expression.

"Are you okay, Cu?"

"... I'm fine."

Cu had her back to Naga, and replied curtly as usual. Her usual poker face seemed rather red... That seemed to be all.

"Let's go then."

Naga pulled on the reins, and the horse carrying the two riders started moving. Yuuki used her air board hurriedly, Ikushina also pulled her reins. Yuuki

made the air board fly really low and move side by side with Naga's horse in no time. Naga slowed down to let Ikushina catch up.

"Hey, wait."

"What is it Yuuki? My fight just now wasn't just luck. Isn't that right, Cu?"

"Yes."

"Who is asking you about that!? You stated your name just now, so that is your name? You remembered?"

"Ah?"

Naga looked at Yuuki in surprise.

"Name? My name?"

"Huh? Isn't that your name?"

Yuuki looked at Ikushina and Kay behind her.

"Yup, you stated your name."

Kay raised her hand.

"Really?"

Naga asked, and Kay stared at him with a regrettable expression on her face.

"Really. I heard it very clearly okay?"

Yuuki turned her head back.

"Don't you remember?"

Yuuki asked. Naga held onto his reins and tilted his head.

"Nope... No impression of that."

"Idiot. Not only did you lose your memory, even your short term memory is regressing. Aren't you just an idiot?"

"Hahaha, maybe you're right."

After Naga laughed for a while, he switched back to a serious expression and said, "What name did I say?"

"Eh, I remember it's Oda Saburo Noble Naga... Right?"

Yuuki looked back.

“Ah, that’s right, that’s the name. Oda Saburo Noble Naga.”

Kay answered.

“Oda Saburo Noble Naga?”

Naga tilted his head again.

"That’s my name?”

“That’s what I want to ask.”

Yuuki replied, Naga tilted his head and looked behind baffled. At this moment, Kay waved at him.

“No no, that’s just what I heard. I will feel troubled if you look at me with such a serious face.”

Naga turned back and held the reins with his head tilted.

“Hmm– I think I heard that somewhere before.”

Yuuki said with a blank expression.

“You are still the same.”

“Since I said it so naturally, it shouldn’t be a joke. That should be my name then. I will probably remember more a while later.”

“You better control yourself.”

Yuuki looked at him with an accusatory gaze, making Naga feel uneasy.

“Well, isn’t that fine? What happened here was like sending a smoke signal, the main forces behind won’t cross the river now. We will end today’s battle with our victory.”

Naga’s words made Yuuki face turn doubtful.

“Is it, over? Will the war continue?”

Yuuki asked, and Ikushina pressed further,

“That’s right. There are still more than a thousand enemies, right? They really won’t cross the river and attack again?”

“They won’t.”

“Why?”

Not just Ikushina, even Kay and Yuuki tilted their head.

“Because the utter defeat today was enough to make them afraid.”

“The soldiers are too afraid to move?”

“Something like that, the main thing is that even the commander in chief fears us, Yuuki.”

“Eh...”

Yuuki used a ‘do you get it?’ kind of gaze to look at Kay and Ikushina, who shook their heads in silence.

“Humans are afraid of your magic. And it was a complete defeat for them. They are afraid that they’ll be wiped out if they continue to fight. Then they won’t be able to defend their capital. That’s what they are afraid of. If the army is destroyed, the commander in chief would need to take responsibility. That’s what they are afraid of. That’s why, they won’t go any further unless they have the resolve.”

“Is... Is that so.”

“Ahh, that’s right. The Cassandra army that is in such a state won’t attack the black forest for quite some time. And so, this is your victory.”

After Naga finished saying that, Yuuki squeezed out a smile and averted her face in a clumsy manner.

“Y-You are right. Not just us, the victory belongs to you and us...”

Naga opened his eyes wide with an “Oh?”

“Is that so, Yuuki acknowledges my effort too.”

“W-W-What nonsense are you saying! Who acknowledged you... You might have contributed just a little. Or rather, you thought up the battle plan.”

Naga nodded with a hum.

“Is that so?”

“But nothing more.”

“Hey— Wait— I also did my best and contributed, okay—?”

On the horse behind, Kay raised her hand and shouted.

“Ahhh, I get it I get it. Kay, Ikushina, Yuuki, Cu and everyone else did great. It’s not the accomplishment of just one person. We won because everyone worked and fought hard together. This victory belongs to everyone, and is also a victory for the Harrigan clan.”

Cu, who was swaying with the horse, showed a rare smile. Because her back was facing Naga, he didn’t notice. Yuuki stood on the air board with her arms crossed, looking down on Naga with a lofty attitude.

“Hmmp, it’s good that you put your heart into this. If you keep this up, I don’t mind you being the bottom member of our clan.”

Kay and Ikushina, who were on the horse behind them, laughed.

“Hey Yuuki, your attitude is like that of a tribal chieftain, you know?”

“Well, it’s Yuuki after all.”

“Wait...”

Yuuki’s face blushed as she turned her body on the air board after uncrossing her arms.

“You there, what did you just say?”

“Nothing~~ Right, Ikushina?”

“Nothing at all~~”

“Don’t look down on me, want me to cut you into pieces?”

“Wah~~ How scary~~”

Kay put her hands on her head and twisted about in an exaggerated manner. After laughing for a while, Naga called out to the three of them.

“Okay, let’s get back to Harrigan, the other witches should be gathered by now.”

Naga spurred the horse gently and pulled the reins. The horse carrying Naga

and Cu sped up immediately and left Yuuki in the dust.

“W-Wait, stop!”

Yuuki increased the speed of the air board, Ikushina pulled on the reins in a hurry too. The four of them, riding their horses, and Yuuki, on her air board, turned into specks in the distance as they disappeared into the wilderness.

Chapter 4: The Beginning and End of a Battle

Left gaping and stunned beyond words at the disastrous scene in front of his eyes, Geobalk arrived at the left bank of the Schwein River on his horse. The sight of fallen allies could be seen strewn about as he looked down from the riverbank. There was no doubt that they were the soldiers from the 2nd battalion that tried to cross the river, but their numbers seemed to be less than expected. Then, as the general looked to the other side of the river to check for the rest, he saw, in the distance, fallen soldiers in numbers he couldn't count accurately. If viewed from the riverbank, there seemed to be more than 120 fallen soldiers. What's more, nobody was moving. In this case, Geobalk could only think of the fact that the 2 companies, which had crossed the river, had been completely annihilated after receiving the enemy's attack. Still, the number of casualties just didn't add up to the total forces deployed.

Who attacked these soldiers? How were they assaulted? Why did all of them die in such a place? What happened to the rest of the soldiers? Neither Geobalk nor his staff officers could understand it at all. No, rather, there was one thing they knew. There was no one else who could do this but the witches. However, even if they were to speak of the witches' full force, it would only amount to, at most, 20. Even if they were to attack with their full strength, wiping out a full battalion was inconceivable.

Shouldn't the reinforcements have crossed the river if the enemy commenced their attack? Actually, wasn't the message relayed to Geobalk saying that Sneijder was supposed to cross the river in order to help the ally soldiers? But, no matter how ardently the general looked out over the battlefield, there was not a single shadow or sign of the remaining soldiers from the 2nd battalion. Leaving aside the 120 fallen soldiers at the opposite side and the scarce number of those near the river bank, there should be more than 300 of them left. Nevertheless, the numbers still didn't match up.

It was a situation where one couldn't deny the possibility that they'd been spirited away. Having a circumstance that was impossible to comprehend in front of their eyes, Geobalk and his men were unable to speak. They could only stand there.

"General, there are some people from the 2nd battalion headquarters that we managed to recover. I think you'd want to listen to their stories, but..."

At his subordinate's voice, the veteran general came back to his senses. Then he quickly thought about his next actions. A conclusion was reached quickly.

(Under these incomprehensible circumstances, I guess.... we are unable to continue our plans.) Geobalk bit his lips hard enough to cause them to bleed and stared at the other side of the bank.

How did this battle play out? Why did that many soldiers die on the other side of the river? And where did the rest of the 2nd battalion go? The General made the apparently correct decision of stopping the river crossing since he didn't know the circumstances. Nevertheless, he had in fact made a terrible error.

Naga couldn't use the surprise attacks of the flood or the dolls twice. Apart from those, the witches had no other large-scale means of attack left, but at this stage, it was nearly impossible for the Cassandra Army to see through that. Such was Naga's prediction, and it proved accurate. Naga's prediction that the General would be afraid to begin a new assault at the risk of incurring further losses was right on the mark. At least, if Geobalk didn't check what kind of methods the witches resorted to, or what happened to the remaining soldiers of the 2nd battalion, he shouldn't be able to continue his tactics. The reason why Naga was able to read the army commander's thoughts and movements was perhaps due to him grasping Geobalk's and his soldiers' psychology. The general decided to withdraw to the encampment and reorganize his troops.

"We will leave 200 units from the 1st battalion to watch over this side. For now, we are going to retreat to the encampment for the time being."

"Y-Yesss"

The army headquarters' officers scattered upon receiving the order from the general. They were in such a rush that they didn't even have enough time to fold up their tents. The light and heavy troops that Raibaha was in charge of

were house-sitting and began to bring in provisions and didn't notice any abnormal changes in the situation.

The General and the officers assembled inside a big tent in the headquarters and began to question the survivors from the 2nd battalion. After listening to the accounts of several of them, Geobalk had finally become able to grasp the circumstances that had led them to this. Once the accounts were recorded chronologically, the events went as follows: 1. A scouting unit of 10 men crossed the river after dawn and found something suspicious.

2. The 2nd company captain, who received the unit's report, ordered the 3rd, 4th and 6th platoons to cross the river.

3. The 3 platoons of 30 people discovered a crowd of dolls that resembled small logs at the other side of the river. In order to check what it was, they approached them.

4. Upon learning that those things were puppets controlled by the witches, the soldiers were suddenly attacked with bows and arrows.

5. A total of 50 people from the 1st, 2nd, 5th and 7th platoons of the 2nd company, together with their headquarters, tried to cross the river in order to support the other 3 platoons.

6. The reinforcements did not reach them in time; the 3rd, 4th and 6th platoons were completely annihilated.

7. The wooden puppets, which destroyed the 3 platoons, advanced toward the riverbank.

8. Then they assaulted the 50 people from the 2nd company that crossed the river for the rescue.

9. A group of cavalry, which crossed the river, witnessed the assault.

10. The cavalry ran back and reported the circumstances to the 2nd battalion commander, Sneijder.

11. Sneijder ordered the 2nd battalion to cross the river in order to save the 2nd company. however, at that point, he was unaware it was an attack laid out by the witches.

12. With the 50 soldiers of the 2nd company receiving the enemy's blow, they had already fallen into a state of devastation.

13. The 1st company crossed the river.

14. Following them, the 3rd company began to cross.

15. As soon as the 3rd company finished crossing, the 4th company started their crossing as well.

16. The 1st company began their deployment on the other side, and after that, the 3rd company.

17. At the time a part of the 4th company landed on the other side's bank, a flood moved toward them from upstream.

18. Many of the 4th company's soldiers who were in the midst of crossing were washed away by the flood.

19. The 2nd battalion was divided between the left bank and right bank.

20. Sneijder, who was stuck on the left bank, made a further attempt of crossing the river.

21. However, being afraid of the attacks coming from the witches, the remaining 4th company and the escaped survivors from the 3rd company wouldn't move from their place, delaying the river crossing of the headquarters.

22. The 1st company that crossed to the right bank together with the 3rd company were surrounded by the wooden dolls while receiving a fierce attack.

23. Sneijder, who lost his temper, went first and took the lead.

24. Being shot on his way by an enemy unit lying in ambush, Sneijder died on the spot. This was thought to be done by the witches, however, no details are known as to where they were hiding or how he was shot down.

25. Falling into a great turmoil, the remaining officers and men couldn't respond efficiently. Rather, lots of them escaped in fear after witnessing their commander's death.

26. A fierce battle unfolded between the enemy's dolls and the 1st and 3rd companies on the opposite bank. Despite that, the soldiers were, in the end,

destroyed. Not to mention, it seemed that the witches entered the battle at that moment, however, the details of that are not known to the few survivors.

27. The 3rd company captain was thought to be killed in action from a melee, whereas, the 1st company captain, who fought til the end, decided to desert together with several of his subordinates.

28. They remained missing afterwards.

29. There appeared to be a few who escaped from the battlefield, but the majority of the soldiers went missing.

30. Like that, the 1st and 2nd company were destroyed.

31. A part of the 4th company, which crossed to the right bank, took flight together with the remnants of the 4th and 2nd company at the left bank.

“How reckless. How foolish.”

The general ground his teeth while shaking. Both the 2nd company captain, Sneijder, and his officers acted rashly. However, believing that he himself held the most responsibility for being unable to control them, the veteran general blamed himself. At the same time, Geobalk was astonished at the strange nature of the strategy drawn by the witches. It was the first time he had been so splendidly set up in his entire life. Many would probably describe their surprise attacks, ambushes, or various other similar attacks as a fighting method worthy of the cowardly witches, however, Geobalk didn't feel like he was in a position to criticize the witches. Rather, he felt some sort of respect for them.

(One cannot make an excuse when losing this magnificently. To begin with, if someone was to oppose 2000 people with a group of barely 20 people, it would only be natural for his opponent to fall into his clever plan. Not being able to realize that was my failure and negligence.) Geobalk ceased any further combat-related actions.

(Attacking the witches, who planned and executed such a splendid tactic right now would be the height of foolishness. Especially, after we have already lost.) The general decided that they could only wait to recover their strength for a renewed attack on the witches.

(I'll probably be released from my duty, or perhaps, even executed, however,

if I lose any more of these soldiers, our country will be assaulted by others.) At any rate, even now, his country was theoretically vacant. Yielding any more sacrifices will only weaken the war potential needed to protect the country. Geobalk ordered the recovery of the soldiers who scattered and a search for those who were washed away downstream. He also told his officers they would fold up their encampments and return to Fort Ein depending on how fast they finished the previous job.

Nobody opposed the decision made by Geobalk.

There was no way that everyone who'd been washed away had drowned. Soon after, a dozen soldiers were found crawling up near the bank's vicinity downstream. Nevertheless, apart from them, nobody seemed to have survived the flood....Or perhaps, many of them crawled up the bank and ran after narrowly escaping death? In any case, the Cassandra Kingdom was the one to sustain the heaviest losses during this invasion. Among the 3rd battalion, nearly 300 individuals were confirmed dead from drowning. If one was to add those who went missing after being washed away, the number would further increase. What's more, among the dead, the 2nd battalion commander, Sneijder, was included as well. Many of the remaining 120 soldiers escaped during the battle, and around 50 of them returned to their original unit. Where did the other soldiers run away to? Or perhaps, they were killed by the witches during their escape? This however remained unclear. Summing up those who died and went missing, it would be approximately as many as 450 soldiers. Since the 450 were those among the 1700 from the fighting troops, their lost ratio would exceed more than a quarter of that number. Even if one was to include the escaped soldiers and the several dozens of those who had returned, the ratio would still be above 1/5. It would be different if the same number of fellow troops was to clash with the enemy head on and engage in fierce battle, but, neither the 1st nor the 3rd battalion took part in the fight. Actually, if one was to only limit the casualties to the members of the 2nd battalion who were fighting, rather than just saying that there was an unprecedented 90% that were lost....it would be more like a nightmarish number. No matter how powerful the spells the witches could resort to were, it was an unbelievably horrible number from clashing against a mere 20 individuals.

The number of sacrifices was a problem, however, it wasn't just that. The more concerning fact was that many of those soldiers would harbor fear against the witches. What's more, losing a battalion of 500 during a single fight against an enemy of only 20 witches, despite possessing a large army of 2000 soldiers, and then abandoning their plan of invasion would probably result in Cassandra being looked down on by the other countries. Just like Naga said so confidently before, the Cassandra Kingdom had suffered a defeat from which they would not recover from for quite some time.



Not losing a single member nor having a single injured person, the household of Harrigan gathered again. After confirming the withdrawal of the Cassandra Army, everyone, except for Selena and Jiiniasu, who were in charge of patrolling, returned to the 1st fort. It was decided that a victory banquet would be held to celebrate the success of Naga's plan and the witches' efforts. Gathering inside the most spacious residence building, Naga and the witches toasted with their spare wine "It's the first time for me to slowly savor wine."

The first time they held a toast, Naga had only gulped it down, therefore, he had no chance of savouring it. After enjoying its mellow flavor, he drank the red liquid.

"Oh..... it's, unexpectedly delicious."

Naga, who seemed to take quite a liking to it, asked for another cup. Aside from the alcohol, the banquet was a bit frugal, as the food was mostly preserved goods from storage, but nevertheless, nobody was concerned about that. That's because, they won. They were able to repel a big army of almost 2000 with barely 20 people. Far from achieving victory, they shouldn't have even been able to lose honorably. For the witches who had been repeating similar battles, it was their first time experiencing a big victory. Even though they had only dried bread, dried meat, and pickled vegetables, the taste of victory was sweet. Chatting and conversations sprang up here and there.

Finally, 1-2 witches began to sing as they got a little tipsy from the alcohol. There were also those who got caught up in the mood and started to dance. To begin with, if someone like the witches were to sing and dance with their thin

outfits, they would look even more erotic than gypsy dancers. Naga began lewdly gazing at the witches. He was glancing as he drank some more wine from his cup when, “Naga-san, are you still drinking?”

Ais, who was in a half-rising posture, called out to him

“Ah? Yeah, I’m drinking.”

Lifting up the cup in his hand, Naga replied.

“This grape wine is quite tasty, Ais.”

It looked like she drank a considerable amount, as her cheeks were faintly dyed pink.

“Then, how about, one more cup?”

“That’s right. After all, you’ve gone through the trouble.”

Naga didn’t dislike the taste of the alcohol, nevertheless, he wasn’t good at holding his liquor. Truthfully, he was weak to it. Because his body somehow remembered the feeling of getting drunk, he thought about paying more attention so as not to overdrink.

‘Should I take one more?’ – However, being urged by Ais, he reached out his wine cup.

Once he did so, Ais grabbed the wine barrel behind her back with both her hands, raised it swiftly, and presented it towards Naga.

“Here, help yourself.”

“No, even if you tell me to help myself....”

Naga stood on his knees and peeked inside the barrel. It was still half full.

(Am I supposed to insert my cup and scoop the wine using it? Is it really fine to do so?)

He looked at Ais with a doubtful face.

“Won’t you drink?”

“Eh-em....no, I wonder about that.”

Once he hesitated,

“If Naga-san won’t, I will.”

She carried the barrel in front of and suddenly leaned/tilted it towards herself.

- Gulp, gulp, gulp*

“Drinking directly from the barrel?!”

Naga bent his body backward significantly.

“Ah, hey you, it’s better for you not to try to best Ais in a drinking contest.”

As he turned around to the voice, he saw Yuuki carrying her cup single-handedly with a pink face while standing.

“That’s because her limit for drinking is bottomless/nonexistent.”

- Don* – Ais put the barrel down on the floor.

Looking inside it, there was nothing remaining.

“It appears to be so.....”

(Ais, You’re truly scary!)

Naga trembled in fear.

(Still, nothing can be done if someone with monstrous strength like her goes rampant, I guess) Thinking so, he decided to pay her more attention at once.

“Oi, Ais. You better be careful with overdrinking.”

Looking around restlessly, she looked back at Naga.

“Who are you saying is overdrinking? I’d rather be more careful in your place.”

“...No, on second thought, please forget it.”

At that time,

“Okay okay, Kay, take off your clotheees.”

“Cu as well.”

“And Linne.”

“And Linna.”

“kyahahaha”

“Fine, let’s go, let’s go—”

Noticing how the drunken witches danced while undressing, Naga tried to leave the place with a cheerful attitude. Once he did so, his shoulders were grabbed from behind.

“Aw”

Turning around him, he saw Ais’ fingers sinking firmly into his shoulders.

“Wai, you, it hurts!”

Naga tried to object while turning his neck, as he couldn’t move his body. With a sweet smile on her face, Ais further inserted more power into her hands.

“Aw awa! awawa! awwa! Ais, my shoulders are breakinggg!”

“Ahaha, like that, you won’t be able to run away. At least, I should lecture you.”

As soon as she threw out such a parting threat, Yuuki tried to sneakily leave the place.

(W-What? What do you mean with lecturing? Speaking of which, that girl, Yuuki, why is she trying to sneakily run away.....? Hey.) “Awwwwwww!”

Naga, who was unable to endure, screamed out.

“Naga-san, please sit there.”

Grabbing both his shoulders, she forcefully pressed him down. As he couldn’t resist her strength, Naga bent his legs down.

“Yes, look this way while sitting on your heels .”

“Awawawawaaw!”

Feeling that his shoulder bones were seriously about to snap, Naga sat on his heels just as being told. Once he did so, he turned his body around.

“Naga-san, you get it?”

“W-what?”

“You’re way too lecherous. Even if a man is a creature that is willing to give in after a hundred attempts, being an honest pervert is bad. Are you saying that it’s fine to oogle at and touch others? If you don’t become more refined, it will be no good, you know?”

(This woman, is she lecturing me despite being a heavy drinker?!)

'I see' – Naga agreed with what Yuuki had said just now.

(Speaking of which, what does a refined pervert look like?)

Thinking so, Naga wanted to retort, however, he was too afraid to do so.

Ais continued her lecturing dispassionately and earnestly.

“Naga-san is a person with a clever head, but I think you lack a bit of consideration for others. For example, your eating habit is too unmannered? You should eat more carefully, slower, and chew your food properly.”

(Am I a kid or what?!)

Naga retorted without thinking ahead. Obviously, he was doing so inside his heart. At that time,

“Okay, let’s all undresssss.”

“Yeaaaaah”

Together with her voice, sounds of applause rose up. Naga, who couldn’t put up with that, turned away.

- grab* – his shoulders were grabbed.

His head was turned back with a grinding sound.

“Awawaaw, Ais Awww, my skull is going to spliiit!”

“Naga-san”

“W-W-W-What?”

Ais peeked at his face from up close.

“Even though I just said so, what’s the meaning of your attitude? You ain’t supposed to be a little boy who doesn’t get turned on at women’s naked

bodies.”

“Nonono, that’s because a woman’s nude body is of grave importance to a man? And if there is a guy like that, shouldn’t he also doubt his sanity?”

‘Did she understand?’ – Naga thought so while giving out a sigh of relief as Ais released a bit of her grip, but, “Is that so? In the end, it’s the problem of watching?”

- Haa* – Ais exhaled her sigh.

“Is that so? It can’t be helped then. In that case, I’ll have to gouge out Naga-san’s eyes.”

“Haaaaaa?”

“By doing that, you won’t be able to watch women dancing or singing in the nude, right?”

“This woman is saying some absurd things while smilinggg!”

Jumping up and retreating, Naga tried to run away from Ais, but his shoulders were again grabbed.

“Ufu, Ufufufufu. I’ll gouge them out. Completely.”

“Uwaah, wait wait waiiiiit!”

Naga extended his hands while trying to push her back. And then,

- Munyuuu*

An amazingly tender and elastic feeling passed through his palms.



“.....ah?”

“.....eh?”

The two of them directed their sights toward the front of Naga’s hands. Before anyone had realised it, his hands sank into Ais’ voluptuous pair of breasts. The smile disappeared from her face.

(Scaryyy!)

Naga hurriedly withdrew his hands.

“Despite me telling you off that much, Naga-san doesn’t intend to stop being a pervert, I guess. Is that so? I’m troubled. Gouging out your eyes seems to be a bad idea, so the only option would be to chop and mince your hands....”

“Someone please stop this drunk!!!!”

At the same time as he shouted,

- Gonnennnnnn* – the dull sound of a punch reverberated, and Ais lost her strength in her arms. As her body shook violently and collapsed forward, Naga hurriedly, and clumsily, caught her with his open hands.

“Don’t drop her.”

The touch from Ais’ curvaceous body and the indescribable sweet fragrance which stirs his nostrils, Naga’s heart skipped a beat at both of these.

“That was close, Naga.”

Looking behind Ais’ back, there was Harrigan standing there. There is no doubt it was her bluish black hair, which took the shape of a big mallet, that hit Ais’ head from behind.

“Good grief, I was saved.”

Naga breathed out a sigh of relief.

“Still, to think that your hair would make her faint, they’re, indeed, unreasonably hard.”

“True. That’s why, it’s better for you to be careful.... If you do anything indecent to my daughters, I’ll turn all your bones into powder using this hair,

ok? That would then mean that you'd worked yourself to the bone."

"T-They have totally different meanings!"

Once Naga, who had a pale face shouted, Harrigan suddenly loosened her face.

"Leaving that aside, I've something I need to talk about with you. It's regarding what we'll do from now on."

"Yeah, I also thought about discussing that matter."

"Well then, that's right, it will be bad if we interrupt the girls when they're in high spirits. Come with me for a bit once the banquet finishes."

"Yeah, got it."

Naga, who nodded, laid down Ais' body, which he was carrying.

Since then, one hour has passed. Choosing a time when the majority of the witches fell asleep after getting drunk, Naga and Harrigan moved from that room to another. He was led to a simple, small room that looked like an attic with a wooden floor and wooden walls with glass instead of a ceiling. Originally, because all the rooms were similarly built like that, so it wasn't just this room. Since there were quilts and cloth coverings, could it be that this was a sleeping room? As soon as a quilt was placed on the floor, Naga and Harrigan sat down while facing each other. The flame coming from a candle in a stand slightly swayed, making both their long shadows inside the dimly lit room sway as well.

"Won't you drink?"

Harrigan tapped a bottle she had brought.

"No, I've already had enough."

"Is that so?"

She pushed aside the bottle while bowing forward.

"Let me express my gratitude, Naga. You've saved us, thank you."

"No, I don't particularly need any. I was just repaying my debt, so it's fine to accept my deed as an equal prize."

Lifting her face, Harrigan smiled with a grin.

“You’re unexpectedly humble, aren’t you?”

“Don’t say unexpectedly. I’m a discreet and humble man, you know?”

She stared at him with her scornful eyes.

“I wonder if you should be saying that.”

“Oi, am I not a good person?”

“That’s right. Whether you’re a pervert or not, it doesn’t change the fact that you’re a great strategist.”

“Oi, don’t you mean to say that I’m a pervert either way?”

“Am I wrong?”

“I think..... you’re most likely wrong.”

“That too, I won’t be pondering about who should be the one to say it..... so, guess it’s fine either way.”

Harrigan tightened her expression.

“We were able to gain a great victory.”

“I guess so.”

“With that, what do you plan to do from now on?”

“I was thinking about that as well, still...”

Putting his arms together behind his head, Naga looked up at the sky.

“You still have other comrades, right?”

“What?”

“Your family alone isn’t enough for us to descend down to the plains.”

“D-Descending the plains?”

Harrigan opened her eyes in surprise while looking at Naga.

“Why should we take such a risky action?”

“Asking why. For the sake of protecting your household and creating a land where witches can coexist with humans in peace, moving our headquarters to the plains would be more effective.”

“N-No.”

As Harrigan blinked her eyes with amazement, Naga, who folded his arms continued to speak with a difficult expression.

“We have gained but a single victory in a small battle this time. It’s just a single battle that has ended, and there will be another one soon. Rather than that, the ending of one battle is the beginning of another one. The final victory has yet to be achieved. I wonder, would it be correct to say that the final victory will be the time when the witches will be able to live freely with dignity? In order to grasp that, we can’t stay inside the black forest forever.”

“Y-Yeah.”

“Increasing our influence, moving our base, raising the number of allies, as well as the population, and extending our control over territories. Those are the required conditions for us to obtain our final victory. Starting from there, we will be able to create a country, a world where the witches can live peacefully.”

Harrigan’s body went numb with shock and she was filled with surprise.

(T-This man, the prospect he has is different from ours. Rather than that, could it be that he sees further ahead than us?

However, Naga’s plan gave an impression of being kind of insane.

“Still, is such a thing possible? Our single family consists of just 30 people, and the most that can participate in a fight is 20.”

“That’s why we need allies. Didn’t you say earlier that there are other clans of witches, whom you’re acquainted with, living inside the forest?”

“Hm? Ah, there are.”

“Won’t you join forces with them?”

Harrigan distorted her face unpleasantly.

“With those guys?”

“What’s the matter? Is there any problem?”

(There are lot of related issues with them, but... well, that’s not important.)
She asked with a suspicious expression.

“It’s not impossible for us to join forces with them, but what do you intend to do?”

“First, I’d like for you to specify a place for a discussion.”

“Discuss? About what?”

“I’m thinking about having them participate in the next battle.”

She opened her eyes widely again.

“Where and with what do you plan to fight?”

“I’d like to capture 1 or 2 forts from somewhere, but before that, let’s go and capture Fort Ein on the other side of the Schwein River after we form an alliance with our allies.”

“What?!”

Harrigan leapt up in astonishment.

“A-Are you serious?”

“I may have lost my memory, but I’m always serious.”

“uuuh uuuhn uuug....”

Slightly groaning, she lowered herself.

“Despite saying our fort is small, the walls are strong and the space is plenty, right? Normally, it can pack several dozens of people, or perhaps more than a hundred of soldiers right now. It’s just the scale you’re talking about is different.”

“Well, actually, if I don’t see it myself, I won’t know how strong your fort is, but I can understand, even without being told, that their fort is much stronger.”

“Mu, is, that so?”

Harrigan made a dissatisfied face; nevertheless, Naga continued while ignoring her.

“What’s more, they have just recently suffered a painful defeat, so there’s a chance they will further increase the number of soldiers due to them being afraid of you.”

“I.....In that case, isn't it more reason not to attack? With just our strength, it doesn't seem like we will be able to take their fort, so....”

“That's why, I was saying we need to increase the number of allies. Does the neighboring clan have a similar number of people as yours?”

“Y....Yes, that's right. They have, more or less, the same number.”

“So adding them together, there would be around 50 people? With that many alone, we should most likely be able to capture one or two forts.”

Harrigan shook her head from side to side with a dumbfounded expression on her face.

“It may still be too early to say that.”

“As long the ally sees our fighting style, I think there's a chance.”

“You....You mean it? Still.....no....but...”

Was Harrigan still hesitating? She would repeatedly tilt her head in contemplation.

“Also, it probably isn't a bad idea for the other witches as well. Provided we can capture Fort Ein, the black forest will be at peace for some time.”

“That may be so but....understood. Anyway, let's call out to them. I think they'll join the discussion, but I'm not sure as to whether or not they'll show any interest in fighting by our side.”

“Yeah, that much should do.”

“Saying that, how are you going to persuade them?”

“Something like ‘Won't you join us together in creating a world where witches and humans can coexist?’, I guess.”

“A...Are you honestly going to say so?”

“I'm always honest.”

(Good grief, I was filled with awe there. Indeed, that's a noble and grand ideal worthy of the Dragon King, still....ah, that's right!) “Oi, Naga.”

“What?”

“I heard from Yuuki and Kay, but, didn’t you give your name back when you took down the enemy’s battalion commander?”

“Ah, that’s...”

“Were you able to recall your name?”

Making a miserable face, Naga scratched his head.

“No that’s, you see, I’ve already told Yuuki and the rest, but I don’t remember the name I gave.”

“Is that so? Certainly, that girl, Yuuki, said that you introduced yourself as Oda Saburo Noburunaga, or something like that, still....”

“If she heard it like that, then she might be right, however, just as I said, I can’t recall it well.”

Responding to that, Naga suddenly remembered the promise he made with Lela. The promise....about telling Lela whenever he had retrieved some of his memory.

(No, but I have not recalled anything yet. Even now, I can’t remember the name I gave out at all. Despite that, Lela might learn about that incident from the other witches, so perhaps I should have a light conversation with her afterwards?) Harrigan stared at Naga in front of her with a grave, or rather, with a face pondering about something.

“Do you know the meaning behind ‘Dragon King’?”

“Yes, well, that’s because I was told by you.”

“When it comes to ‘Noburunaga’ part, it would be interpreted as ‘the Saint Dragon King’ or ‘the Noble Dragon King’.”

“Oh? Somehow it feels like my status has been raised.”

'Uhahaha' – Naga laughed.

“It isn’t a laughing matter!”

“W-What are you angry about?”

“No, sorry. I’m not particularly mad. Still, how should I say it, that’s right....aren’t you really the Dragon King’s messenger who came from the

heavens?”

Naga shrugged his shoulders a little.

“Even if I’m asked such a thing with a stern face, I can only feel troubled at replying. I’m already aware about me losing my memory, but I’ve not the slightest idea about where I come from, or who am I.”

“.....I guess you’re right, sorry for that.”

“No, it’s not something you should be worrying about, Harrigan. Well, at least we know the name that I gave out.”

Saying so, Naga placed his right hand on his throat.

“Sooner or later, the memory will pop up inside my head. By that time I should probably remember various other things besides my name. It feels like I’m close to that.”

“You think so? Then, shall I patiently wait til you recall them?”

'Yeah' – nodding, Naga leaned forward.

“Speaking of which, when are you going to call out to them?”

“Perhaps, it’s better to do it as soon as possible. In that case, I shall prepare a messenger tomorrow.”

“Whom are you going to appoint?”

“Ais. There’s never too much or too little when it comes to a subordinate like her. What’s more, we have nobody else besides Ais.”

“...Guess you’re right.”

Naga, who nodded, added inside his heart:

(If only she didn’t drink alcohol, she would be perfect, but well...) “There should be nothing wrong in letting Lela tag along with Ais.”

“Is that so? Then, let’s leave that errand to those two. By the way, is there anyone who knows any details about Fort Ein?”

“Why is that? Is there something you want to know?”

“To be more accurate, I want to know how far its sphere of influence

stretches, how many provisions they have, where they store their water and also, how many soldiers are stationed there right now.... I think something along those lines.”

“Well, let’s see. At least, we don’t possess this sort of internal information. At most, we would have Yuuki observe from above.”

- groan* – Naga slightly groaned while folding his arms.

“The difficulty in capturing the fort will greatly vary depending on that information, but...”

“Nothing can be done about that. If that’s the case, we can only have somebody infiltrate the fort.”

“No....that would be the method of last resort. For the time being, let’s prioritize the discussion with your acquaintance. Speaking of which, what’s the name of that witch?”

“Vita Solskjaer Sraymeyer. The head of the Sraymeyer Clan.

Epilogue 1

“Mother, I’m back.”

Having her body completely coiled in a long, dark mantle, Elysione Anian Sraymeyer looked up above her head and called out. As she did so, Vita Solskjaer Sraymeyer, who was having an afternoon nap on a hammock about five and a half metres above the ground, in a tree, opened one of her eyes lazily.

As always, she was wearing her lovely, fluttering short dress. However, she would take off her symbolic headgear during her naps. Indeed, Vita had just awoken and opened her eyes to look at Elysione, but, one could still feel a peculiar force coming from her.

“...Is that you, Elysio? So, how was your job?” “That’s....”

Sensing Elysione’s unusual voice, she raised her body abruptly.

“What’s the matter?” “Things have become complicated.” “.....Could it be, that Harrigan and the rest died in the battle?”

Elysione shook her head from side to side emphatically.

“Not at all. Rather than dying, they have achieved a big victory.” “W..... What?! You—”

Vita’s body fell off from the hammock as she leaned excessively forward to look at Elysione.

“Owaaa”

She continued to fall headlong towards the ground.....Nevertheless, she immediately did a flip and pointed her feet towards the ground. Her dress fluttered in the wind. This, however, wasn’t even as surprising as what happened next. In addition to Vita’s body being light and flexible, she had great

reflexes. There were many points that deserved praise. However, once she pointed her feet towards the ground, she slowed down rapidly. This was surely not a natural occurrence. Right before landing, Vita's body looked as though it had stopped midair. As she lightly landed, as if she was a bird, Vita folded her arms with a concerned face and struck a daunting pose. Her appearance was cute and her posture didn't give off a sense of intimidation. But, her pupils emitted a mysterious radiance.

"Let me hear the details of your story, Ely. Still, I don't want my other daughters to learn about this yet, so be more discreet."

Being told so, Elysione crouched down and started to whisper into her ear.

"That's, you see...." "Are you a simpleton?!"

Vita, who was folding her hands, hit Elysione's head with a chop.

"Are you making light of me, you rascal!" "Ah, no, I did so because you told me to be more discreet...." "Don't squat down! Are you trying to emphasize the fact that I'm short?....Or perhaps, you want to boast about how tall you are? I'll let you die, you rascal!"

Holding her head with teary eyes, Elysione looked up at Vita and shook her head vigorously.

"Well, I guess that's fine, since I can always spank you. More importantly, what did you mean by saying that Harrigan won? Just what on earth happened?" "Ok, I'll tell you what I saw from the start."

Elysione, who kneeled down on one knee, started to report.

"Just like Mother had told me, I placed the mantle previously near the Schweiz River and went there first, so as to observe Kasandora Kingdom's army crossing it.

But, contrary to what I had expected, the right side of the riverbank turned into a battlefield." Elysione described, chronologically and in detail, what she had witnessed at the battlefield. Without interrupting her, Vita listened carefully and intently, but...

"...and this is the whole story of the battle between Harrigan's Clan and

Kasandora's army that I witnessed, Mother."

Once Elysione concluded her report,

"I can't believe it....."

Uttering these few words, Vita became speechless.

"....." "....." "....." "....." "....." "....." "Aren't you going to say anything?!"

Whack*

She shoved the sole of her foot right into Elysione's face, making her fall over onto the floor behind her.

"Fuwa" – Tumbling once on the floor, Elysione immediately rose up and held her nose.

"What are you doing all of a sudden, Mother?" "That's because you were doing nothing. Don't just keep silent; say something at least, like: 'What should we do?'. If you don't say something, it's hard for me to start talking again."

"Even if I'm told something unreasonable like that..." "Do you want me to strip you of your mantle and hang you on a tree, naked?" "What should we do, Mother?"

Vita narrowed her eyes that glowed with an evil light.

"You're saying it while trying to fake your expression. You are indeed making light of me, you rascal."

shudder shudder shudder*

Reaching out both of her palms in front of Eliushune's eyes, Vita grabbed her neck and, at the same time, shook with all her might.

Slightly smacking her lips, Vita shifted her eyes and looked up at the sky.

"Despite it being true, this fighting style is nothing like Harrigan's. I thought that only someone like Kishiria would be capable of pulling off such a maneuver, but, no that's wrong. Even she shouldn't be able to come up with something like this. How should I say it, doesn't the way they fight give off a distinct impression...?"

Suddenly turning back, Vita looked at Elysione, who stood a short distance

away.

“Wasn’t there some sort of change among Harrigan and the rest? Or perhaps, something has happened to Kasandora’s army? Still...”

Elysione quickly nodded her head.

“Yes, there was.” “W-What was it?” “There was a human guy, whom I’ve never seen before, among Harrigan’s clan.” “You foooooooooooooool!”

Vita suddenly leapt forward. Her small body floated into the air and aimed directly at Elysione while gliding above the ground.

Thwack*

As soon as Vita Kicked Elusione in her face, the girl was blown away with a dreadful force.

“Why didn’t you mentioning such an important thing at the beginiiiiiiiiing?!”

Elysione, who tumbled 14 metres away on the ground, held her mouth while apologizing.

“I-I’m sorry.”

Despite that, one would want to say that Vita’s kick had a terrific power as she blew away the tall Elysione with her small body. Nevertheless, if one was to look from the side, her kick didn’t give an impression of having that much force, which was strange.

“Good grief, since you’re more stupid than I’d expected, I might not be able to utilize you, I guess.”

Vita, muttered and spat, quickly pulled herself together and contemplated on the meaning behind Elysione’s words.

“A man....is it...? But...if it’s a man, then there’s no doubt he was somehow responsible for Harrigan’s victory. Still, who’s that guy? Why is Harrigan following a human guy? I don’t get it, I don’t get it anymore.”

Casting her eyes to the floor while deeply pondering, Vita grumbled and then finally stopped and looked up.

“Whatever the case may be, it feels like Harrigan will soon come to us. Should

we wait til then? But.... there's still that human guy. Somehow, things have gotten interesting, right?"

Putting a daring smile on her face, Vita faced Elysione, who was timidly looking at her.

"What are you doing there, Ely? We are returning to the fort. Won't you come with me quickly?" "Um, as long as I don't have to go through the punishment," "If you don't come with me quickly, I'll seriously consider hanging you naked and upside down with your legs spread...."

Elysione rushed back with her full speed.

"It would be better to let my other daughters know about this. As soon we return back, I'll have you explain it to them once again, Ely." "Yes, Mother."

Vita, whose appearance resembled that of a young witch, was followed by Elysione, with a serious face, as they returned back to their base.

Epilogue 2

Raibach, who was in charge of commanding his troop and entrusted with the protection of the camp, became horrified when he learned of General Geobalk's defeat at the hands of the witches. According to what he had heard, the invasion army completely lost one of its battalions.

(Suffering a defeat like that, I guess the general won't be able to continue his plans.)

That fact strengthened Raibach's belief that the witches couldn't be dealt with using ordinary methods. At the same time, he consoled himself regarding the loss of his own troops, which was due to their opponent being stronger, rather than them being weak. It was decided upon Geobalk's order that they would all retreat back to Fort Ein. Therefore, the army provisions carried by Raibach's troop didn't come in handy.

For Raibach, it was simply a waste of his time, however, he didn't plan to utter a single complaint. That's because he could feel at ease as long he didn't have to involve himself with the witches. Rather, it was a joyous feeling for Raibach, whose fear of the witches had penetrated into his bones. Due to the unforeseen casualties, the Kasandora Kingdom's forces had to retreat.

The army withdrew to the capital, leaving 300 soldiers at Fort Ein. One could say that they left those soldiers due to an unprecedented fear of the witches. Geobalk feared that the witches would advance beyond the Schweiz river to take advantage of their victory. After the army licked their wounds from their defeat, Geobalk tendered his retirement from the front lines to his majesty the king. There was no other option for him than to take the responsibility for this loss. There was no doubt that the king would feel bitter about this loss, regardless of whether or not he punished this veteran general who had helped him in the past. With his honor being trampled upon in front of Cardinal Aiba, Kasandora could probably be no longer sure of his position as the king. Soon

after Geobalk retired, the king appointed the son of his deceased brother, in other words, his nephew, as the next general. His nephew was still young and had little experience in leading an army. Nevertheless, he was already past his twenties and was also familiar with military affairs. The man had no experience with wars, as he was primarily a financial official, but nonetheless, he showed signs of being talented in practical military affairs. There should also be staff officers under the command of the previous general who could have been promoted, however, due to the offenses they suffered when they were defeated, many decided to retire together with Geobalk. With that, the king's nephew, Guiscard, who was inexperienced with wars as a leader, would take up the position of the new General.

One of Guiscard's subordinate came to Raibach, who had returned to the capital. Just as he was called, Raibach was dealing with the documents regarding his troop together with a few of his subordinates inside a room reserved for him.

"Oi, Raibach." "Ah, if it isn't the battalion commander, Maglev."

Once he confirmed it was the newly appointed battalion commander, Maglev, Raibach hurriedly put down the documents and stood up.

His subordinates stood up hurriedly as well.

"Is there anything you need from me?"

Standing at the doorway, Maglev nodded composedly.

"General Guiscard would like to have an appointment with you." "You mean General-dono?!" "That's right. Please show yourself without further ado." "Ha?! You're telling me to meet General Guiscard in person?"

Raibach, who answered as if paying respect, tilted his head inside his heart.

(What? To think that I'd be called soon after the general took his office.... Wha, could it be that I'm going to be discharged? I wonder if they will move me to an office.)

Raiba turned towards his subordinates, who couldn't hide their immense curiosity on their faces.

“Well then, I’m going to meet General Guiscard. I’ll leave the rest to you.”
“Have a good day, Captain.”

He made the comment as he followed Maglev through a corridor. Raibach was poor at both numbers and writing. Good grief – muttering that inside his heart, Raibach sighed. Provided he was moved to an office, his hopes and wishes for a successful career would be like a dream come true.

(Well, guess it can’t be helped? Perhaps, it’s because of the fact that I’ve been working under the command of General Geobalk. Still, judging from General Guiscard’s view, it may be that I’m just an eyesore. But even so, I don’t understand why he would call someone like me, who was demoted from a company captain to a supply troop captain. After all, things like this should be clear in my documents. What does he plan to do, that young master?)

Filled with doubts, by the time Raibach reached the new general’s office, he saw someone unexpected.

“Oh my, so you’re Raibach-kun?”

The new general, who was much younger than him, displayed a smile toward Raibach. Standing behind Maglev, there was a new adjutant waiting for his command. It was a tall man with a sharp look. The new general, whose body was wrapped in a new, richly decorated suit, had a pleasant facial expression, which emphasized his charming features.

(Did you use to perform as an actor in a group of itinerant dancers, or what?)

Without thinking ahead, Raibach retorted inside.

However, he wasn’t foolish enough to let the new general learn about his thoughts. For now, Raibach decided to salute with feigned ignorance.

“Yes, I’m Captain Raibach from the supply troop. I’ve come on your request.”
“Ah, that’s right.” “Yes? So, what kind of business do you need from me?”
“That’s why, my dear Captain, I’m releasing you from your duty.”

(Eh? As one would expect, am I going to become an office worker? Or is he perhaps going to discharge me for good...?)

Raibach feared this to be true, but Guiscard said something else entirely.

“I will reinstate you back to your previous position as a company captain.”
“Eh? Yes? I’m..... going to become a company captain again?” “That’s right. Is there anything you’re discontent with?” “No no, not at all. Still, it came as bit of a surprise to me.” “I value your experience. After all, you’ve worked your way up til now thanks to your battles against the witches. There’s probably nobody who wouldn’t want to capitalise on that, right?”

(Oi oi, this young master, isn’t he quite understanding?)

Inside Raibach, some respect and acknowledgement grew towards the new general.

“Well then, will you take up your duty at once, Captain Raibach?” “Yes. What type of task will I be assigned to me this time?” “Surveillance.” “Yes. What kind of surveillance do you mean?” “Of Schweiz River, obviously.”

(So it was about that?!)

Upon learning about the content of his given duty, Raiha felt the urge to cry and fuss, but nevertheless, kept a straight face.

(In the end, he just wants me to observe the river so as to prevent the witches from crossing it over?)

As if backing up what he had guessed, Guiscard continued to speak.

“You and your company will camp near the left side of the riverbank and watch for any movements coming from the witches. If they happen to appear, please send a fast horse to Fort Ein while hindering the witches from crossing. Do that at all costs and with all your might and determination. This shall be your mission as the company captain. Is that clear?”

(This damn youngster, you say you value my experience? VALUE MY ASS! In the end, aren’t you just making me disposable?!!!)

Raibach’s high esteem for Guiscard suddenly dropped.

“As for more detail, please ask Riyaga here.”

The new general pointed to the tall man behind him.

“Well then, if it’s fine for you to go.”

At Guiscard, who waved his hand once their business concluded, Raibach bowed down.

“Yes, I’ll excuse myself.” “Captain Raibach, please come this way.”

Being accompanied by the adjutant with a sharp look, named Riyaga, they both left the general’s office.

(What on earth, wasn’t the most dangerous job forced on me here?! At this rate, being a supply troop captain is many times better! Good grief, truly, nothing good comes from getting involved with the witches.)

Following Rigaya’s back while walking down the barrack’s corridor, Raibach exhaled a big sigh inside. Because of Guiscard, he was able to return to his position as a company captain. However, Raibach, who was abandoned by his God, wouldn’t anticipate for this change to greatly change his life.